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NATURAL CAUSES

AND

SUPERNATURAL SEEMINGS

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SUPERNATURAL SEEMINGS

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BY

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

STATEMENT OF THE ARGUMENT 1

PART I.

FALLACIES INCIDENT TO THE NATURAL OPERATIONS OF SOUND MIND.

CHAPTER I.

1. NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING 7

§ Uniformities of Experience 12
§ Sanctification of Error as Superstition 19
§ Fallacies of Coincidence in Reasoning 23
§ Fallacies of Coincidence in Observation 28
§ Laws of Assimilation and Discrimination ... 36
§ The Favourable Conditions of Superstition 40
§ Fallacies of Collusion 46

CHAPTER II.

NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING—*continued* 52

§ Causes of Erroneous Observation 52
(*a*) The Natural Limitations or Shortcomings of the Senses 54

PAGE
(*b*) The Want of Opportunities of Observation 56
(*c*) The Want of the Habit of Observation 60
(*d*) The Effects of Bias 74
(*e*) The Misuse and Abuse of Words 98

CHAPTER III.

2. The Activity of Imagination 116

PART II.

UNSOUND MENTAL ACTION.

CHAPTER I.

Mental Malformities 149

CHAPTER II.

Hallucinations and Illusions 162

CHAPTER III.

Hallucinations and Illusions—*continued* 187

CHAPTER IV.

Mania and Delusion 220

CHAPTER V.

Natural and Supernatural Religion 249

PART III.

THE ATTAINMENT OF SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE BY DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

		PAGE
SECTION I.	ECSTATIC INTUITION	265
„ II.	ECSTASY OF FEELING	275
„ III.	INTUITION OF THE HEART	287
„ IV.	THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF ECSTATIC INTUITION	305
„ V.	THEOLOGICAL ILLUMINATION	319
„ VI.	ISOLATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE ...	340
„ VII.	THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS	344

STATEMENT OF THE CONCLUSION 354

NATURAL CAUSES

AND

SUPERNATURAL SEEMINGS.

STATEMENT OF THE ARGUMENT.

How is it that mankind, in different ages and places from their beginning until now, have had so many different notions concerning the supernatural, if there be a supernatural with which they can come into relations of knowledge and feeling? How is it that they have had any notions at all concerning it, if there be no such accessible supernatural? Those who believe confidently that there is not, or that in any case we cannot know anything about it, ought to show how it has come to pass that people everywhere, savage, barbarous, and cultured, have been impelled to construct it in the forms in which they have constructed it; a plain scientific obligation lies on them

to explain the natural origin of human belief respecting that which is beyond the reach of human thought. Those who imagine that there is a supernatural, and that we know something about it, ought, on their part, to formularize plainly the different methods of its revelation, to examine critically their respective claims to authority, and finally to make plain which revelation has the best authority, if there be more than one true, or which is the true one, if one only be true.

While that is waiting to be done, it will not be amiss to inquire and examine how far the causes of beliefs in the supernatural, and of the sundry and diverse notions that have been entertained concerning it in different times and places, can be identified with causes which are habitually working in human thought now, and which were more largely operative in its more primitive stages of development. These causes may be classed as follows:—

I. Causes which lie in the natural operations of the sound mind; of which two principal divisions may properly be made, namely—

1. The natural defects and errors of human observation and reasoning.

2. The prolific activity of the imagination, always eager and pleased to exercise itself. For it ought to be well considered in this relation that, while the

exercise of observation and reasoning is slow, toilsome, and difficult, the exercise of imagination is quick, easy, and pleasant; and how largely, therefore, the scanty supplies of the former are immediately supplemented by the lavish profusions of the latter.

II. Causes which lie in the operations of the unsound mind, and which fall naturally under the two principal headings of—

1. Hallucinations and Illusions.

2. Mania and Delusions.

III. Causes which lie in the adoption of ecstatic illumination or intuition as a special channel of supernatural knowledge.

If the domain of the supernatural has shrunk immensely in modern times, as it undeniably has, and if the age of miracles be now past, as on all hands is repeated continually, the question to be seriously considered is how much of this result is due to the progressive discovery of the natural origin and working of causes which formerly, being entirely hidden, lent all their support to theories of the supernatural. Is it because they have ceased to operate as once they operated in human thought that the supernatural has waned? or is it that it has come by degrees, as human means improved, to take less and less part in human doings? Is the change sub-

jective only? or is it an actual objective change? If the former, then the supernatural relics in modern belief will be owing to the fact that causes, once so widely operative, continue to work in the old way in some minds.

PART I.

CAUSES OF FALLACIES INCIDENT TO THE NATURAL OPERATIONS OF THE SOUND MIND.

1. The Natural Defects and Errors of Human Observation and Reasoning.
2. The Activity of Imagination.

CHAPTER I.

1. THE NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING.

In all historical ages—and, having regard to their traditions and superstitions, we may assume it to be true also of the pre-historical ages—men have continually made errors in their observations and reasonings; they have seen and drawn conclusions from what they have seen more often wrongly than rightly. It is thought to be no matter of surprise that savages and barbarians did so habitually in the pre-scientific ages; the tendency is rather to look down with compassion on their aberrations as the natural consequences of their low mental states, and to nurse the pleasing conviction that nothing of the kind happens now, in these days of superior insight and better reasoning. In spite of this easy self-gratulation, however, it is undeniable that the same kind of errors in seeing and thinking which were made then are made still, that the great majority of persons reason

no better now than the great majority did then, and that beliefs are cherished now which have no better foundations than many extinct pre-scientific beliefs; and it is pretty certain that in years to come some cherished beliefs of to-day shall serve to those who are then alive as curious and instructive examples of states of imperfect mental evolution. As in the past and now, so then, wiser descendants shall wonder to think that rational beings could ever have been so very irrational as their forefathers.

Does it not seem strange, when we consider it, that the race of man on earth should have gone forward as well and far as it has gone, when all the while most of that which it was thinking and believing was not true? Let any one read and quietly reflect on the appalling histories of the numerous absurd beliefs and practices that have prevailed among mankind in the past, and prevail still in the dark places of the earth especially, considering by the light of them what the human race has been from the beginning until now, and he can hardly fail to be seriously perplexed what to think of it. He may well think that to go wrong is as natural to the human mind as to go right. Certainly it would be a thing incredibly strange were we to suppose that the faiths which inspired actual conduct were as badly based as those which filled the abstract regions of specula-

tion, the implicit in conduct as ungrounded as the explicit in thought. But men have never fed their bodies on fictions. The reasonings of the savage respecting the habits of the game which he pursued and the fish which he caught for his food; the wily precautions taken by him to hide his trail from his enemies and to foil their stealthy pursuit; and his careful observations of the scarcely perceptible signs by which to guide himself through the trackless forest and across the pathless prairie—these were as sound as the reasoning and observation of the astronomer of the present day, who, noting the track of a comet, predicts the exact moment a thousand years to come when it will be at the same spot in the heavens, or, from an unexplained deviation of a planet's orbit, proclaims the presence of an undiscovered planet at a place where it is afterwards found to be. In the one case, as in the other, the rules of right seeing and thinking are the same, and in the one case, as in the other, the same fallacies are apt to infect seeing and thinking.

To the vulgar it seems a marvellous thing when the astronomer makes predictions that embrace such vast lengths of time and such immensity of space; but the wonderful science which enables him to do such things is not at all different in kind from the common knowledge by which the dullest rustic

foretells with certainty that one sort of seed, when put into the earth, will grow into a mustard plant, and another sort of seed into a turnip. The science of the astronomer is of the same kind as the knowledge of the vulgar; it is the inevitably ensuing intelligence common to those who, being normally constituted mentally, have the opportunities, appliances, and training necessary to the study of a class of phenomena requiring special means of observation; it is the common sense appertaining to an uncommon class of phenomena. And the errors of such knowledge have no prerogative of birth or dignity over other errors; they are errors simply, of the same kind and illustrating the same mental tendencies as common error.

We are apt nowadays, perhaps, to think too much of theories of knowledge and too little of the knowledge which is implicit in wise action. No nation ever yet made itself by theories of social contract or by any other explicit theories; the work was done first, and the theories came afterwards; the reason was latent in the fact before it was patent in the explanation. It was not by fictions of thought, but by realities of feeling and doing, that savages grew into powerful tribes or nations; and the inquirer must look beneath their superstitions and other notional absurdities of the intellect who would find out how

that was done, and how far their wrong theories of the universe were of practical worth in the use made of them to guide and sanction the real forces at work in social development. Even discoverers of a law of gravitation, however high their just pretensions, cannot properly afford to despise the condensed and, so to speak, silent knowledge which is implicit in the social growth from scattered tribes of wandering savages to a strong and settled barbarous nation.

There is always a fund of wisdom in the common sense and practical instincts of the common people, the instruction of which philosophy misses when it neglects or disdains to take sufficient account of it. Having to deal with the stern realities of life, working men are compelled to have working beliefs in order to act; feeling instinctively that the best test of the value of a belief is—Will it work? they turn their backs impatiently upon empty abstractions and demand beliefs with real contents. For example, persons of culture who make for themselves the dismaying discovery that they cannot go on believing in a personal God, are happy to take refuge in more general terms and abstractions, such as Deism and Pantheism, and make mighty use of them; but the labouring classes, repudiating such barren metaphysical abstractions, either repudiate God altogether or demand that, if there be a God who ruleth the

earth, He shall be a real living God, working in the events of the world as they do themselves; not an abstract absolute, emptied of contents and living only in the misty regions of speculative thought, but "a literal, personal, and eternal God." Thus they, by their practical instincts, escape those self-deceiving effects of abstractions by which philosophers sometimes seek and discover the explanation of a concrete fact in what is no more than the abstract statement of the very same fact: the sleep-producing effects of opium in the soporific virtues of that drug; the evolution of the universe from the like to the unlike in a self-determining instability of the homogeneous, whereby it starts on heterogeneous tracks of stabler being; the determination of self in an abstract will; the moral sanction of individual conduct in the authority of an abstract morality, which thereupon becomes a metaphysical entity or a spiritual inspiration from without; and the like verbal sophisms.

§ *Uniformities of Experience.*

If it be asked of the rustic how he is sure that from one sort of seed will spring one sort of plant after he has buried it in the earth, and from another sort of seed another sort of plant, he will be likely to answer that any fool knows as much, because even a fool can-

not fail to notice so common and constant a succession of events; and if the astronomer be asked how it is that he foretells with such precision so amazing a result at so vast a distance of time, he will say, if he be not prompted by scientific vanity to make a mystery of his calling, that every astronomer who knows his business can do it as well as he can. In both cases the reasoned inference rests upon the observation of uniformities of experience, and in neither case has it any authority other than experience: not individual experience alone, it may be, but the slowly gained and consolidated experience of the race embodied in the general statement or so-called law. So long as the uniformity of nature lasts as it is, so long must men, constituted as they are, continue to conclude with confidence, from certain coexistences and sequences of events within their experience, as to future coexistences and sequences; and so long as they do that they will be liable, from imperfect observation, as they always have been, to make mistakes by supposing connections that are occasional and accidental to be invariable and essential—by believing casual to be causal events.

It is notoriously a hard matter to *conceive* that which contradicts uniform experience, and a harder matter still to *believe* it. If two things or events are always seen together, they are inevitably thought of

together, and thereupon believed to be bound together by an inseverable tie, not in the mind alone, but in the nature of things. They would be so certainly if the mind were fully and exactly sensitive to every atom and force, separate and combined, in the universe, and to their several relations—if, in fact, being commensurate with it, it were omnisensible and omniscient; but as that is very far from being the case, the tie may or may not be, and most often will not be, absolute. Easy and abundant occasions of error present themselves at every turn. A wider experience and a larger reach of reason may prove the association supposed invariable to be no more than accidental, or at any rate not to be invariable. All swans were believed to be white until a black swan was seen for the first time, "swan" and "whiteness" being two notions that always went together; for a long time it was inconceivable and incredible that there could be people at the other side of the earth, since, if there were, they must be walking with their heads downwards; and it is still inconceivable to many persons that a body in motion would go on moving at the same velocity if it were not acted upon by some new force. In these cases the contradictory experiences suffice to correct the erroneous generalizations. But contradictory instances have not always an equal success to overthrow false conclu-

sions. The general, once accepted, is very apt to be invested with an authority greater than it has obtained from actual experience, or than any actual experience could give it, and so to survive in spite of experience. It has truly greater authority than individual experience, because it represents the common or general experience of the kind; and therefore it is that it is by many thought to be above experience altogether, the real source of its higher authority being overlooked. Nay, it is itself only too ready, once it has got launched into vogue, to resent its real origin, and to kick down the humble ladder of experience by whose steps it has been raised to its abstract dignity.

That which we have uniformly felt and thought and made the adjustment of our natures to, becomes a part of our mental structure—a fundamental form of thought, if invariable in human experience; wherefore to change or reverse the constant experience, and especially to introduce a new and quite strange experience, is to sever us from our hold on reality for the time being, and to occasion a helpless bewilderment or vertigo, a sort of mental dissolution, until we are able to organize a new mental adjustment.* Hence

* It is just as it is with the bodily equilibrium, to maintain which we require the silent help of all the impressions from without that we are wont to be in relation with, not conscious of them the while, perhaps. Hence sudden deafness in one ear occasions distressing vertigo for a time.

it is that an earthquake, going counter to all ordinary experience, causes a most extraordinary and indescribable feeling of alarm and mental impotence in countries where it is a very infrequent event; and it was for the same reason, no doubt, that comets and eclipses at one time produced an overwhelming terror, as they do still among some barbarous peoples, being thought to be ill-boding portents big with calamities. It may well be for the same reason that a nation goes mad with panic of fear and rage of suspicion when its political and social framework falls to pieces, as happened in France during the storm of its great Revolution; and for a similar reason, again, that the individual (although the cause of the desolation in this case is internal) whose disordered brain is oppressed with a painful impotence of function, and whose thought and feeling are almost paralyzed, is overwhelmed with a strange reeling of sense and thought, showing itself in a terrifying loss of hold on realities, an alarming feeling of dissolution of personality, a panic-like dread of formless ills. Let him who would realize the necessity of the familiar definite relations between the internal fabric of mind and the external framework of things, listen to the melancholic sufferer struggling in vain with the inadequacy of language to express his appalling sense of the unreality of things and the disabling appre-

hension which the strangeness of his own mental being occasions him.

"It is with beliefs as it is with movements: the right belief, like the right movement, being that which has been acquired by the suitable adaptation to former like circumstances and now fits with most exactness present circumstances; true, therefore, if they are essentially like, untrue if they are unlike. To ask a person to believe otherwise than according to his uniform experience is like asking a skilful purposive movement which has been acquired with great pains by special training to adapt itself suddenly to the accomplishment of something quite different; and to ask him not to apply old beliefs to the apprehension of new facts is like asking a man not to use for the grasping of a quite new object the most fit movements which he is capable of, because they are not entirely fit. He must use the old motor apprehension or grasp until he has fitted himself with a new one, which he gains by gradual adaptation. So it is with beliefs: he cannot choose but make use of the old belief, though it does not fit exactly, but in doing so he ought to take great care to see exactly wherein it does not fit, and to proceed to modify it accordingly. Does it err by falling short of or by being in excess of the facts? and is it necessary to add to it or to take from it, or otherwise to modify it?

The work of modification must be a work of patience and pains, for it is as hard to dissociate two ideas that have always gone together in experience as it is to dissociate two movements that have always been associated in practice. Were a curious person, by way of philosophical experiment, to go about diligently to dissociate his experiences, it might well happen to him to see many things in a new light, to see some things which he had previously been entirely blind to, and perhaps in the end to make discoveries of a surprising and instructive kind. A good effect of wide observation of men and things and of a large general culture is to leave the mind open and susceptible to new experiences which ought to modify or reverse old conceptions, instead of declining converse with them or relegating them to a category which fits them not. On the other hand, one of the most signal features of the savage mind and of the uncultivated mind everywhere is the incapacity to receive new ideas, and the tenacious holding to received customs and notions which, being part of the wisdom of their forefathers, whose *manes* they perhaps worship, they regard reverently as a part of the order of nature, and, like it, not even admitting of question.*

* A very early, if not original, worship of mankind, is still practised at the present day. In Java is a tribe called the *Karangs*, supposed

§ *Sanctification of Error as Superstition.*

A great cause, then, of ordinary errors of thought, and of ordinary errors that have attained an extraordinary eminence as superstitions, is an unfounded belief in instances of uniformity which are not really such, and the survival or standing over (*superstes*) of such errors in religious beliefs and customs after they are discredited by observation. It is an inference from the particular to the general when the general has not the authority of adequate experience to warrant it, and the subsequent perpetuation and sanction of the inference as sacred in spite

to be descendants of the aborigines of the island, whose old men and youths four times a year repair secretly in procession, by paths known only to themselves, to a sacred grove in the dense forest; the old men to worship and make offering, the youths to see and learn the mysterious litany of their fathers. In this grove are the ruins of terraces laid out in quadrilateral enclosures, the boundaries of which are marked by blocks of stone laid or fixed in the ground. Here and there on the terraces are more prominent monuments—erect pillars surmounting oval piles of stones; flat slabs on the ground supporting egg-shaped blocks; and specially noteworthy, a pillar, erect within a square marked out with stones on the ground, round which the worshippers plait at every visit a fringe of Areng palm leaves. Here these despised and secluded people, following the rites and customs that have descended to them through their forefathers from vastly remote antiquity, continue to celebrate what are evidently phallic rites of worship, repeating with superstitious awe a litany which they do not comprehend, and whose origin and purpose are lost to their traditions. (Forbes's *Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 101.)

of experience. Those things which, when they went together before, were followed by good luck, will, when they occur together again, bring good luck after them, and a day on which a misfortune has befallen becomes an unlucky day. Thus it is that there is still a strong feeling, and in former days there was even a religious obligation, against commencing important business on the unlucky day. In reality there may be no more connection between the two events than there is between an eclipse of the sun and the birth of a red-haired child which chances to take place during it, or between the flaming of a comet in the heavens and the career of a great conqueror or a great criminal who is born under that aspect of them. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since Ovid referred to the vulgar objection of the ancient Romans to marriages in May, the probable reason of the aversion being that the funeral rites of the Lemuralia were celebrated in that month; but still the superstition is not extinct, for marriages in May are thought by many to be unlucky now. How vivid and penetrating a ray of light does the fact throw on the persistence, for good or ill, of the past, be it never so remote, in the present of human thought and feeling!

The priests of ancient Rome, making good profit to themselves out of this omen-seeking habit of mind,

as the medicine-men of savage tribes do still, discovered, in the entrails of the animals offered up as sacrifices to the gods, the signs propitious or unpropitious to the enterprise about to be undertaken. And the derivation of omens from the flights of birds was developed into an elaborate science, of which the superstitions still lingering in remote country villages with respect to the good or ill luck portended by flights of magpies are but feeble survivals. How little real observation was at the bottom of omens of the kind, widespread and hallowed as they were amongst all sorts of people in all quarters of the earth, is shown clearly by the fact that the same event which was an omen of ill luck in one nation might be an omen of good fortune in another nation, and that the sight of the same kind of bird was a good or a bad omen according as it happened to the right or to the left of the person who chanced to see it. In like manner, when prayers were made daily to saints in Christendom, with a more vital belief in their efficacy than exists generally now, or than it is perhaps possible for any one to feel in the modern atmosphere of thought, one saint was invoked as specially propitious to one person or one class of persons, and another saint to another person or another class of persons; whence it did not fail sometimes to happen that the saint who was the

patron of one was hostile to another when the interests of the two conflicted.

Of course, he who had prayed once to a particular saint, and had got what he prayed for, was persuaded that he had got it in consequence of his prayer, and ever afterwards invoked that saint with heart of good hope, notwithstanding that on a hundred other occasions he failed to obtain that which he prayed for. In some Roman Catholic churches at the present day the walls inside are nearly covered with the votive tablets of those who, having prayed to the Virgin or to a saint for the recovery of a mother, child, sister, brother, father, or lover, from sickness, have thus recorded their gratitude for the favourable answer which the event has been.† And so in England still, when the country is suffering damage from the long continuance of wet weather, and the harvest cannot be

* The Lacedæmonians, according to Xenophon, put up their prayers very early in the morning, in order to be beforehand with their enemies and to pre-engage the gods in their favour.

† And not in Christian churches only. Of a Buddhist temple in the province of Shansi, in China, to which the neighbouring Mongols make pilgrimages in numbers, Mr. Gilmour says, "It seemed to be quite a famous temple, and was hung almost full of its own praises, written on red cloth and silk, the grateful offerings of votaries, who in this way returned thanks for having their prayers answered." (*Among the Mongols*, p. 144, by the Rev. James Gilmour, M.A.) All which naturally seemed very absurd and barbarous to a missionary of the one true religion.

gathered in, and the farmer looks round him in despair at the rain which continues to fall, special prayer is made solemnly to Almighty God in English churches, that He may turn from the people those evils which they for their sins have most righteously deserved, by sending fine weather. If fine weather comes at length after the long continuance of wet weather, it is a manifest and merciful answer to prayer; if not, the credit of prayer nowise suffers by its seeming ill success on the occasion.

§ *Fallacies of Coincidence in Reasoning.*

It might naturally be thought that people of all countries in all ages would not have offered sacrifices and supplications to their gods had not the events often answered the expectations of those who were at the cost and pains of offering them. Propitiatory hecatombs of slain creatures, human and animal, offered up in countless numbers on countless altars in all parts of the world, are surely proofs of the existence of gods who have inclined their ears to hear the urgent prayers of mankind. Not so; since the many gods that were thus invoked and propitiated with costly rites and ceremonies and amid the reverential awe of their unnumbered worshippers are now universally acknowledged to have had no

existence outside human imagination, and not ever, therefore, to have answered the prayers they were supposed to answer at the time. Their real interest now is as extinct beliefs, not as extinct beings.

Why, then, were they thought to answer prayers? In the main, perhaps, for a reason which operates as strongly now as then as a cause of fallacy in reasoning—namely, the well-known tendency of the mind, so much insisted on by Bacon, to be impressed vividly by agreeing instances and to remember them, while overlooking and forgetting the opposing instances. Those who see proof of the power and good will of the gods when they look round on the numerous votive tablets that are so many records of their benevolent interpositions in human affairs, do not remember to ask themselves where the votive tablets are of the vastly greater number of persons who received no answers to their prayers. When the wicked man, not turning away from his wickedness, is struck down in the height of his evil prosperity, and survives a sad spectacle of social and moral ruin, many good people see the special judgment of Providence in the event; but they do not think to look for a special judgment in the event when the wicked man flourishes and rejoices in the fruits of his iniquity.

So it was with the astrologers of old, who, noting

the fortunes of persons born when a particular constellation was in the ascendant, believed they could predict the fortunes of those who were born under the same celestial auspices, although one of two persons born at the same instant might become a prince and the other a beggar, and were never a whit shaken in their pretensions and authority by the multitude of their failures. So it is with the fortune-teller of to-day, who imposes upon the credulity of the ignorant by the authority of some remarkable instance or instances in which his prediction was verified by the event. So in a signal manner has it been with the observation and use of dreams, for it has not only been an accepted saying that dreams come true, but the opposite saying that dreams go by contraries has also had some vogue; in both cases the remembrance of the hits has remained vivid, while the misses have passed into oblivion.*

When we call to mind how many dreams are dreamt every night, most of them related to the interests and fortunes of the individual, and what

* It was an ancient parable that there were two gates of sleep, out of one of which went false dreams, and out of the other true ones—

"Sunt geminæ somni portæ, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, quâ veris facilis datur exitus umbris;
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
Sed falsa ad cœlum mittunt insomnia manes."

a multitude of events happen in a day, it would be strange if occasional coincidences between a dream and its fulfilment did not take place. In the same way, when we consider how many prayers are uttered in a day, most of them related to the immediate interests and concerns of the individual, and what a multitude of events happen in a day, we have no right to wonder at, or to conclude much from, the occasional coincidence between the prayer and its answer. A person naturally prays for what he wants, and may well happen, in a certain proportion of cases, to get, directly or indirectly, in the natural changes and chances of events; and the fact that he does sometimes get it is not enough, therefore, to warrant the conclusion that he gets it through supernatural interposition, particularly when sympathetic friends, able to help him, know what he prays for. Most persons are ill more than once before they fall ill of the sickness of which they die; and if prayers are made for their recoveries on all these occasions of illness, there must in the nature of things be more favourable than unfavourable answers. He who perceives a divine verdict in the event, whatever it is, is guilty of the presumptuous error into which those persons fell whom Christ severely rebuked for their eager discovery of a divine judgment in the fate of the unfortunate sinners on

whom the tower of Siloam fell. The truly pious believer will not fail to perceive the divine verdict in every case, and will justly rebuke the little faith of those who, not receiving the benefit they asked for in prayer, but receiving instead the evil which they specially asked to be delivered from, fail to see therein the true answer to the prayer and the certain proof of its efficacy. It is a faithless faith which thinks the prayer not answered, because the result is directly contrary to what was asked.

It would be not less curious than instructive to have a complete collection made of all the various omens that have been in repute among different nations and in different ages, in order to ascertain whether the greater number of them were believed to portend good fortune or misfortune. There can be little doubt that the ill omens would be found to preponderate largely over the good omens, if that were done, even as the demons and evil spirits have preponderated over the benevolent fairies and the good spirits; and for this obvious reason, that misfortune and misery are more common in the world than good fortune and blessings, however optimists may pretend differently; and therefore the omens foreboding ill have obtained more credit because of their more frequent fulfilment. Friday retains still a bad pre-eminence as an unlucky day,

not because it is really more unlucky than another day, but because any day of the week on which attentive note was taken, through a sufficiently long succession of experiences, of the events happening on it would have a preponderance of ills; a proof of this being that, in the opinion of some persons, Monday is an unlucky day on which to begin a new enterprise. Omens of good fortune, being more often discredited by the event, would be limited to comparatively rare concurrences and sequences. However bright, then, the ideal theory of life, a solid basis of pessimism is discovered practically in the instinctive experience of the race, as it is implied also in the central thought at the heart of all religions; in the invention of a future life to redress the calamities of this life; in the hearty thanks which devout Christians give to Almighty God, when it has pleased Him to deliver a brother or sister from the miseries of this sinful world.

§ *Fallacies of Coincidence in Observation.*

The tendency of the mind to respond to agreeing instances and to overlook opposing instances, out of which so many errors of thought have sprung, is not manifest in reasoning from facts only, but operates equally in the observation or perception of the facts

themselves; it is, indeed, this tendency which so often vitiates direct observation of that which lies plain to sense, were sense only applied plainly to it. A wrong idea or image of the fact, suggested by some agreeing features of it, prevents the person from seeing the real fact. How easy it is to make mistakes as to the identities of persons, and how often it happens that a witness, or one witness after another, swears positively in a court of justice to the identity of a person, who is not only not the person he is believed to be, but perhaps has no great likeness to that person! Nothing can be more positive than the assurance with which the mistaken evidence is given on such an occasion, nothing more inexcusable as an example of observation, nothing more instructive as an illustration of a common fallacy of observation. As in reasoning, so in perception, the tendency to generalize is stronger than the tendency to discriminate. What happens is that the resemblance of one or two leading features excites the idea of a certain person in the observer's mind, and the mental image of that person thereupon usurps his attention so that he has no eyes for the manifest and manifold minor points of difference in the real object. Perceiving the like features, he instantly, although unconsciously, fills in the rest of them, not from the real face before him, but

from the notional image which he has had evoked in his mind; just as in ordinary vision it is our habit to see a few features or signs only which, informed by previous experience, we interpret into the object; or as in ordinary hearing we catch only partial sounds of the word, and fill up the rest of the sound to complete the words of a known language—for we cannot do it with a little-known language—from the internal reservoir of former experience.

If any one were to mark well and to take careful note of that which he does really see and hear in the course of a day, he would be not a little surprised to discover how small a part of what he thinks he sees and hears he does actually see and hear, and how often he thinks he sees and hears much that he never sees and hears at all. Passing glances or glimpses suggest objects, as passing sounds do words, which in most cases, no doubt, are the appropriate objects and words, but by no means always so; for, if careful attention be given on each occasion to the supposed perception, and it be pursued home to actual verification, it will be found in not a few instances that the object seen or the word heard was not really what it was thought to be, and in some instances was not perhaps even the object or word at all. The healthiest mind, in the course of its daily experiences, has many passing illusions or

hallucinations of that sort, which it does not stay to test and correct because they are incidental and evanescent, and of no concern to its immediate purpose; as in like manner, when not seriously occupied, it has the strangest vagaries of thought and fancy that come and go unheeded. Every one knows how many tricks the mind plays in sleep, but few persons realize, until they observe themselves closely and reflect on what they observe, how many like tricks it plays habitually in waking life.

If it were not more easy for every mind to perceive resemblances than to perceive differences, and to make generalizations than not to make them, it is hard to see how understanding could ever grow into continuity and unity of being; for if it were as eager and careful to note differences as to note resemblances, it might be occupied all its life with the function—such the infinite variety of nature—and so never get forward in development out of distracting plurality into fruitful unity. The tendency to unity is the condition and the exponent of its individuality. There is always a latent and seductive gratification in the feeling and the perception of an agreement; it is something which, being *agree*able, assimilates easily and is a mental gain; whereas it is rather a trial, and may be even a pain, to perceive and register that which does not agree—that which, being in a

literal sense *disagree*able, is not easily assimilable, but dissimilable. The perception or notion assimilates that which, being able to *asself* it—that is, to make of the same nature with itself—is suited to foster its growth, manifesting, like every living thing, its fundamental impulse to increase and the gratification of increasing; while it shrinks from and rejects for assimilation elsewhere that which it cannot make part of itself, and most of all that which is hostile to its nature and growth.

Suppose a person to be put in face of some new fact or relation which he is required to observe for the first time, or of a new feature of an old fact or relation, he comes to it necessarily with a mind preoccupied with notions of facts or relations which he has observed formerly and which do not fit it, and devoid of notions which fit it. How, then, can he truly mind it? It is impossible he can observe it rightly in the first instance, not having the suitable interpretation-notions. At the same time, he could not mind the fact at all, any more than he could recognize an acquaintance, if he had not the prepossession of some related notion. He cannot choose but think of the present and future as resembling the past; for thought is informed by experience, and cannot go beyond it until it has been reinformed by new experience: the past, the indispensable basis of

any knowledge of the present and of any prediction or expectation with regard to the future.

To every one a *thing* is neither more nor less than what he *thinks* it—in effect, a *think;* and to think a new thing he must first use the old thought. How can he do otherwise before new experience has enabled him to organize a new *think?* The old *thing* or *think* represents object *plus* subject; the new thing, therefore, is no thing to him until it is asselfed in a think, for until then it is object *minus* subject. And this is true also of all the properties and relations of the object. If he tells or foretells anything of it or of them, he must do it in terms of the language which he knows, obviously cannot do it in terms of a language which he has yet to learn. In applying, then, the old notion to a new fact, as he must necessarily apply some notion to it in order to observe it intelligently at all, he uses a notion which, not fitting the fact exactly, comes between him and it, in so far as it is unfit, and so hinders him from getting into exact and faithful converse with it; instead of being a completely fitting instrument to accomplish the adaptation, it is an interposing obstacle, to the extent of its unsuitableness, which hinders his mind from moulding itself plastically to the fact.

What, then, must he do? Putting himself reso-

lutely into close converse with the new experience, he must hold his notion loosely as of provisional use and susceptible of modification, or lay it clean aside, bringing other more serviceable notions to his assistance, in order to get a full and faithful impression of the facts in that wherein they disagree from or contradict his preposession; for, if not, the thing which he sees will not be the thing as it is, but the thing which he from his mental prepossession thinks it: he will *prejudge* it as he is preinformed, which, if he is not preinformed rightly, is *prejudice* in its ill sense. The natural bent of the mind so preoccupied is, first of all, to resist the intrusion of the new notion with silent stubbornness; afterwards, when the passive barrier is forced, with angry prejudice, passion coming to the aid of the resistance; and, last of all, when the intruder has gained entrance, to mould it into the shapes of its own notions as much as possible, so forming it to its liking as oftentimes actually to deform it. When one tries frankly to realize the physical process underlying the mental process, the thing seems almost mechanically inevitable.

For a like reason it is that discoveries in science and inventions in the arts have a long and tedious gestation, although they seem most simple and easy, perhaps, when they are brought forth to light. So

obvious, once made, that one wonders they were overlooked for a day even, yet overlooked through so many generations of men that one wonders they were ever made at last. Naturally they were inconceivable before they were conceived. In conceiving what may be one cannot but proceed from the basis of what has been and what is, and so divine the new in the forms of the old. The new conception does not start out of the head, Minerva-like, fully formed and ready to undergo the test of any experiment; it is reached tentatively and by degrees, by modifications of old notions through impressions made by altered facts and relations, much of the modifying impression being unconscious in the first instance. The increments of experience saturate the mind silently until they crystallize consciously into a new conception of things; it is just as if, after much patient brooding over the subject, an electric circuit of discovery were suddenly closed. It is not by reasoning that we get knowledge—we only make the implicit explicit by that conscious process; the knowledge is latent in structural organization before it is self-revealed in conscious function. Accidents are oftentimes the happy occasions of inventions, as observations of animals have been sometimes, because, by presenting things to the mind under new aspects and in new relations, they startle thought

out of its deep grooves of habit, and so provoke new adjustments and reflections. No doubt there is sometimes as much new instruction to be had out of old and common things, were they only observed carefully and curiously with open sense and free mind, as can be obtained from the most ingenious experiments to devise new combinations of things; but the difficulty is to break the enthralling chain of unheeding habit and to stir attention to what one is not used to heed. So it becomes necessary to go about to make new experiments, or to await the happy thought-kindling accident, in order to discover that which a familiar instance lying close at hand might teach plainly if duly minded.

§ *Laws of Assimilation and Discrimination.*

In the strong impression made and left on the mind by coincidences and resemblances, whereby it happens that dissidences and differences are so easily overlooked and neglected, both in observation and reasoning, we have then at bottom an instance of the law of mental assimilation. Like takes to itself like as that which agrees with it, and naturally likes to do so; and inasmuch as, while doing that, it occupies the attention, usurping consciousness, the contradictory instance or difference is inevitably left

much or entirely in the dark. To attend is literally to tend to, and one attention, when it is so strung as to be tension, necessarily excludes another attention. The perception of analogies and resemblances in nature leads easily to generalizations, which are afterwards verified or not. If the generalization be not verified because of the contradictory or irreconcilable instance presenting itself, then this dissentient experience, if taken sincerely home and registered faithfully in the mind, is organized there into a new organ or faculty, so to speak, and thereafter assimilates its likes. A new track of function is opened, to which associations or, as it were, junctions are formed in due course; a rich addition being thus made to the cerebral plexus of the mental organization. To see difference, that is, to discriminate—which was probably the primal condition of the origin of consciousness—certainly is as essential a part of mental development as to see resemblance, that is, to assimilate; the complementary aim and work of the functions being to reflect, as far as possible, in uniformities and varieties of mental growth, the uniformities and varieties of external nature—to develop a mental order in conformity with the order of things.

The order of notions in the best mind, and in the highest achievements of all the best minds together, is infinitely short of reflecting the order of things in

nature, either in exactness or in completeness, since it consists of multitudinous partial, incomplete, fragmentary, scattered relations and groups of relations; and that always within a very limited range compared with the limitless range of inaccessible phenomena. It is the business of observation to make the correspondence more exact, more connected, more complete within its range, and, if so be, to extend the range; a work which must in the nature of things always be effected by slow degrees, since changes in the order of events, demanding corresponding changes in the order of ideas, are equivalent to a demand upon the mental organization to put in function, if not to develop, new lines of organic structure. This it cannot do at all unless it retains its plastic energy. Compare in this relation an old man with a child: both hold confidently to the associations of ideas which experience has ingrafted in them; but while the former, whose mental tissues, so to speak, are dull and stiff with the rigidity of age, is unable easily or at all to relinquish them, and little curious or able to assimilate new ideas and to make accommodations to new circumstances, the latter, though quite as strongly dominated by the few notional associations which he has, and which in the nature of things he cannot conceive otherwise until exposed to new experiences, is full of eager curiosity, quickly impressionable by new facts,

and readily adapts himself in thought, feeling, and conduct to new surroundings. Let the brain, by reason of a natural simplicity of constitution, as in the low savage and in the animal, or by reason of congenital defect, as in the imbecile, be without the nervous substrata which are necessary to subserve new developments of function, then it is impossible to ingraft the finer and more complex associations of ideas, and almost impossible to dissociate the few simple and common ones which the circumstances of life have occasioned.

How should the savage separate in thought two events that have occurred together uniformly in his experience? It would be as easy for him to separate two movements which he had never in his life performed separately. How can he learn a new thought, the organic basis of which, being laid only by the gradual work of culture continued through many generations, his simple brain is destitute of? Charms and prayers, augury and omens, oracles, sortilege, ordeals, exorcisms, incantations, and divinings are the natural resort and refuge, as they are the exponents, of active imagination co-operating with defective observation and little-developed understanding.* Man must have something definite in the

* In the language of cultured people it is common enough yet to hear events ascribed to good or ill luck, as if that were explanation at

way of belief, in order to act at all; acting, then, in relation to a vast and mysterious universe of which he knows nothing, he is compelled to fashion for himself some sort of fixed stay or support, however provisional. Believing in sorcery, he must strive to get rid of the sorcerer; accordingly he institutes trial by ordeal, in order to detect the secret worker of mysterious evil, and thus at any rate gains a sense of some security from unknown dangers; just as, in order to gain security of testimony, he still makes appeal to the supernatural by oaths on various solemn occasions.*

§ *The Favourable Conditions of Superstition.*

It is obvious that the tendency of mind by which undue weight is given to the according event, and due weight not given to the occasions when the result does not answer desire or expectation, which has been so great and manifest a cause of errors of observation and reasoning, has been a great, if not the greatest,

all—anything more than meaningless superstition. A remarkably successful person is said, perhaps, to have had astonishing luck.

"Wie sich Verdienst und Glück verketten
Das fällt den Thoren niemal ein;
Wenn sie den Stein der Weisen hätten
Der Weise mangelte dem Stein."—FAUST.

* It hardly admits of doubt that oaths are, as Mr. Tylor has shown, descended legitimately from ordeals, of which they are in fact the natural survivals.

cause of the authority and credit which so many superstitions have enjoyed. Has it not notably been just where observation and reasoning were difficult or impossible that superstitions have sprung up and flourished? Universally among savage and barbarous peoples, where observation and reflection were inchoate and rudimentary, intellect being in its infancy, and among cultured people in relation specially to matters that lay outside the range of definite apprehension. At the present day, the ocean and the desert, the vast solitude of the barren waters and the vast solitude of the barren sands, remain the favourite homes of spiritual hauntings and phantoms; for where the senses are overpowered by the dread vastness of nature, so that they cannot fix themselves in definite and steady apprehensions, they, reeling in a bewildered vertigo and producing a panic-like awe, become the easy victims of hallucinations and the prolific parents of superstitions.* In vastness which cannot be grasped in apprehension or compassed in thought, there is overpowering grandeur, and such grandeur inspires overwhelming awe; which is reason

* Vast forests have a similar awing effect upon the mind. The forest growths of Russia, at one time overrunning almost all the central and northern territories, contributed powerfully to the polytheistic faiths of the early Slavs—in fact, implanted them so deeply in the Slav nature that the Russians believe in their forest spirits to this day. (*The Russian Revolt*, by E. Noble, 1885.)

enough why the desert and the ocean have been so full of terrors and are still called sublime, while an acre of sand and a pond of water, being nowise impressive, have no terrors and stir no suggestions of the infinite, either with or without an initial capital letter. Without doubt it was from a vague and mysterious awe of that immensity around them which they could not apprehend in definite thought and feeling that man in his early days created so many gods; just as in this age and country a person not disposed to superstition could hardly fail, however much he might despise his weakness, in a gloomy forest on a dark night, to be affected by feelings of fear and awe which would seem ridiculous and humiliating in broad daylight.

It is in proportion as observation and reasoning have become more proficient that superstitions have dwindled and been extinguished. There is not a person living now probably who believes that Baal ever answered a single prayer of the devout Canaanite, or that Jupiter ever inclined his ear to hear the supplication of a pious Roman, or that the Mexican was any the better for the human sacrifices which he solemnly offered to Uitzilopochtli, though it would have gone hard with any one who, living when these gods held sway in human faith, had made a denial of their power and good or ill will. These were faiths

which, being utterly without foundation in fact, were destined inevitably to wane and die before a larger and more enlightened experience. When the inhabitant of a land puts a being of like mind and character to himself in nature, only eternal in duration and infinite in power, in order to satisfy the mental yearning for a source, in terms of his own thought, of the infinite energies and operations which it is impossible in the end he, a finite creature, should ever apprehend otherwise than in finite conceptions or express otherwise than in finite terms of himself — impossible, therefore, he should apprehend or express at all—it is natural that he should solicit his favour and deprecate his anger, just as he would solicit the favour and deprecate the anger of an earthly ruler who had power of life and death over him. But when he is thoroughly convinced by reasoned experience that he never receives an answer to supplications which are as vainly spent as if they were addressed to the shifting cloud or to the passing wind, he naturally ceases to offer them, and first doubting of, finally disbelieves in, the superintendence and even the existence of such a being. So through the ages it has come to pass that faiths have been slowly extinguished and gods have died; for faiths do not, like bubbles, burst, but stealthily, like clouds dislimned, lose their lineaments and gradually disperse.

The history of medicine is hardly less fruitful than the history of religion in example of fallacious observations and of superstitious theories; and for the same reason—namely, the extreme difficulties of observation and the strong propensity to supernatural beliefs where mystery and fear prevail. The human organism is the most intricate and complex structure in the world: a fabric of such nice and implicated correlations of parts and functions that the more its mechanism is known the more the wonder grows that it ever keeps in working order so well and for so long a time as it does; and it is in infinitely subtile and complex relations with a multitude of external influences, physical and social. That being so, the exact causes of its disorders and the exact means of putting them right are inevitably the most difficult and complex study in the world, and afford unlimited scope for fallacies of observation and inference. No wonder, then, that the history of medicine teems with instances of false theories of diseases, and of remedies for them which enjoyed for longer or shorter periods immense reputation, on the basis of what was deemed to be adequate experience of their virtues, but which were afterwards abandoned as useless or pernicious.*

* *Roasted toad* was at one time used as a specific for gout, the toad having been baked alive. This was the receipt: "Put the toads alive into an earthen pot, and dry them in an oven moderately heated, till

It was not only in such cases that the nature of diseases and the art of curing them were insurmountably obscure, but fear lent its powerful aid to magnify the mystery; for disease and death naturally aroused apprehension and alarm, and fear and ignorance are the legitimate parents of superstition. So it came to pass that the causes of these natural calamities were sought in the anger of the gods, in the malice of demons, in the malignant aspects of the stars, in the evil eyes of witches, in the divine judgment of sin, and in like superstitious imaginations; and the alleviation or cure of them in the special favour of particular gods or spirits, or in the prayers of saints, or in the eager and confident use of substances which, because their origin was involved in mystery, or because of their rarity or extreme nastiness, or because of some equally groundless fancy, were thought to have singular and sovereign virtues. If the patient recovered after the prayer or remedy, as many times he would do by the salutary efforts of nature, it was proof of its curative virtue, no thought being given to

they become fit to be powdered." Boyle recommended the thigh-bone of an executed criminal as a valuable remedy for dysentery. Other such remedies were the bowels of a mole cut open alive, and mummy made of the lungs of a man who had died a violent death. (*Pharmacologia*, by J. A. Paris, M.D., 1833.) Revolting remedies, but vastly less pernicious than such remedies as mercury and blood-letting, each of which, when in the full swing of its fashionable abuse, may soberly be said to have, like Saul, slain its thousands.

the numerous cases in which no good effect followed, nor to the many other agencies besides it which were at work in the cases in which recovery did take place. The follies of physic have not been less numerous, if less pernicious and pestilential, than the fables of religion; the follies of the one and the fables of the other illustrating the same defects and tendencies of human observation and thought in a parallel series of fictitious causes and fictitious remedies.

§ *Fallacies of Collusion.*

It is evident that the fallacy of observation and reasoning by which a nation was deluded into the flattering belief of an intervening aid by its special god in answer to prayer, must have been a most powerful agency in sustaining and strengthening the belief which, without it, could hardly have taken root and flourished everywhere so vigorously as history proves it to have done. But, though a main, this fallacy of coincidence was not the entire, cause of the credit of superstitions of the kind. In cases of signal accord between the omen or prayer and its fulfilment, where the improbability of an accidental coincidence was so great as practically to exclude the notion of it, and where, therefore, the claim of a causal relation might well seem indisputable,

no proper account was taken of the possibility of collusion. Now, this collusion might not only take place between persons concerned, whose interest it was to make the experiment a success, and who conspired together for that purpose, as priests, rulers, omen-mongers, workers of magic, and others have often done, but might be a self-connivance. There have always been individuals more wise than the multitude, who, making the natural use of their superiority to gain advantages for themselves, have fooled and duped it for their own profit, and often at the same time for its good—Minos pretending to be advised by Jupiter, Numa retiring to take counsel of Ægeria, and many more like instances amongst all nations; and it is very certain that in this way projects and laws and institutions obtained an acceptance and an authority and a stability which they would never have had as the mere counsels of a sagacious individual, and that useful customs and practices were consecrated as religious ceremonials.*

* The greatest obstacle which vaccination encountered in India was the belief that the natural small-pox was the work of a mischievous deity, MAH-RY UMMA, or rather that the disease was an incarnation of her in the infected person. The fear of offending her and provoking her resentment made the natives averse to vaccination, until they were reassured by a new superstitious impression; no other than the belief that the goddess had spontaneously chosen this new and milder method of manifesting herself, and that she might be worshipped with equal acceptance under this new shape. (*Pharmacologia*, p. 19, by Dr. Paris.)

That which was promulgated as coming by the direct inspiration of the god, and being accomplished by supernatural ways, carried a sanction with it which it could not have had as coming by the inspiration of a good understanding, and being accomplished by natural ways; the omen and prayer were the mysterious means of bringing supernaturally to pass that which the sagacious mind, seeing farther ahead than the multitude, had foreseen, or had designed, by operating impressively on less enlightened minds, to bring about.

It was not always in such cases that the deception was entirely wilful—pure and unmixed fraud; deliberately devised and systematically executed fraud of that kind is rare in the world. There was most often, no doubt, a subtle collusion with self, a large measure of secret self-connivance, which made the author of the deception to some extent its victim also; for when any one has interest or pleasure in duping others, and, letting his will loose from moral restraint, makes a practice of acting such a part, his nature grows inevitably and easily to the habit of its exercise and so brings him finally to dupe himself: deliberate impostor by art, he becomes an ingrained impostor by second nature; a surely avenging destiny thus charging itself with the stern fulfilment of the consequences of action. Note a familiar

example of this process of demoralization in the ease with which one who begins by telling, in dramatic fashion, stories that excite wonder goes on sometimes to exaggerate and embellish and invent until they become complete romances, and in the end he is not himself sure what is true and what is false in them.

There is not a province of human observation and thought which, when its history is examined, is not found to teem with superstitious fallacies and fancies; but whosoever would have instructive proof, in a comparatively modern instance, of the vitality of bad observation grown into superstition, could hardly do better than study the records of witchcraft in civilized countries. If he be cynically minded, he will not fail to find ample gratification of his mood in the horrible and heartrending stories of the terrible tortures and deaths that were inflicted on multitudes of innocent people who were believed to be witches, and in the reflection that the condemnation of these poor harmless wretches received the sanction of the good and wise men of the time—of a most learned and distinguished judge, Sir Matthew Hale, and of a not less learned and distinguished physician, Sir Thomas Browne, so late as the year 1662. The particular reasons which Sir Matthew Hale gave for his judgment on the occasion of condemning to death

the last two old women who were executed for bewitching children in England, have a general and lasting interest. "That there were such creatures as witches he made no doubt at all; for, first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much; secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such crime." A third reason, which had its weight in determining the verdict, was the statement of Sir Thomas Browne, who "was clearly of opinion that the persons were bewitched; that in Denmark there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons." * All which was, in effect, to say that the belief must be true because it had the sacred sanction of religion, because it was a universal belief, and because it had been attested lately by common report of a remarkable instance.

Now, it is plain that all these sanctions rested at bottom on the same fallacious authority, namely, the common malobservation which, taking note of

* "A Short Treatise touching Sheriffs' Accompts;" to which is added, "A Tryal of Witches," written by the Right Honourable Sir Matthew Hale, Kt. London, 1716. Rose Cullender and Amy Duny, indicted at the Assizes at Bury St. Edmunds, executed March 17, 1662. Although Sir M. Hale says that "the Judge and all the Court were fully satisfied with the verdict," yet it appears from the report that Mr. Serjeant Keeling "seemed much unsatisfied with it" (the evidence), "and thought it not sufficient to convict the prisoners."

agreeing, takes no note of contradicting, instances, and overlooks entirely the real cause of the event when the attention is fixed on fictitious causes. The fallacy probably gave rise, in the first instance, to common report; then common report spread widely into common belief; and finally common belief acquired the sanctity of a religious tenet. The example may fitly teach that a belief is not necessarily true because it has the religious sanction, is believed by all the world, even by the most learned and upright, and has the reported confirmation of striking examples from time to time. It is only too true that nations have received, as beliefs necessary to salvation, doctrines and dogmas which would be thought now to do discredit to the observation of a well-trained school-boy. What pledge have men, or can they have, that the supernatural beliefs of the present day will not, like their predecessors, fall into disrepute, and in their turn serve as humiliating memorials of the credulity and infatuation of the people who entertain them?

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING—*Continued.*

§ *Causes of Erroneous Observation.*

So many and great errors and evils having flowed from bad observation and reasoning, it is a natural question to ask how it comes to pass that man observes and reasons so badly when his business is to observe and reason. Because he is a limited being, with very limited capacities, while that which he has to observe and reason about is illimitable. In this relation it has to be borne in mind that observation is a process of growth, not a process of mental photography, slow and tedious necessarily, and only to be perfected by degrees; for it is the organic construction of an internal order of mind, a mental organization, in conformity with the external order of nature by mutual interaction. Had the order of nature been entirely objective, men might have found it all out ere now, since they would have had nothing

to do but simply to make a mental image of it to themselves; had it been purely subjective, they might have had equal success, since they would have had nothing to do but look inwardly, and make a transcription of what they saw there; but because it required the conjoint action of the within and the without in a slow process of organic development, nothing less than the patient construction of a mental fabric, it was impossible the knowledge of it should come otherwise than by minute degrees and slowly accumulating increments through the ages. In any case it was not possible men should observe that which lay beyond the reach of sense; whether, for example, it was that the phenomena were outside the range of vision by reason of their immense distances, as it was with the heavenly bodies before the invention of the telescope, or equally inaccessible by reason of their exceeding smallness, as it was before the invention of the microscope with all that minute, subtile, and extremely active region of nature which that instrument has made known to us. How could they respond, by any fit movement, real in act or ideal in thought, to that with which sense could not come into any sort of direct and intimate relation? The establishment of a direct converse with new orders of facts and relations, by the artificial extension of the range and power of sense, was followed

soon in each case by a gradual modification of old notions, and by the gradual development of a new order of conceptions. Signally do the tedious growth and solid worth of real knowledge of nature through observation and experience contrast with the easy fecundity and ephemeral brilliance of imaginative theories concerning it.

Let us proceed now to inquire and consider what are the main and plain causes of imperfect and erroneous observation, and to summarize them briefly.

(*a*) The natural limitations or shortcomings of the senses.

It is not defect of knowledge alone that has ensued from this obvious cause of inadequate observation; the defect has given rise to large and far-reaching positive error of thought as its natural consequence. Who can estimate the power and reach of erroneous belief which had its root in the exploded notion, so firmly held before the magnitude of the heavens was made known, that the earth was the centre of the universe? How many wrong notions, how many fallacious theories, how many ignorant conceits, have flowed from the crude notion of matter, which, conceiving it as gross and inert, precluded the least conception of the nature and movements of its infinitely minute and active molecules? When it is said that matter cannot possibly think, how widely

different is the meaning which the proposition has in the mind of one who entertains the vulgar notion only of gross inert matter, and in that of one who is able, by means of adequate previous study, to conceive its infinitely active and subtile molecular energies, and realizes how its energies rise in concentrated intensity and dignity as it attains to higher and higher complexity of organization! The medical science of the present day, in so far as it approaches exactness, is largely based upon the minute observation of phenomena in provinces of nature that were long inaccessible to human sense. Instead, therefore, of the demons which were once thought to be the causes of diseases, and to require to be exorcised, and instead of the almost equally imaginary vital spirits and humours which succeeded to the demons when they were discredited, the patient microscopist traces and makes known the life-histories of the minute organisms which he demonstrates to be the real causes of many diseases; and by taking scrupulous pains to keep wounds free from septic germs, or by exorcising antiseptically, so to speak, the germs that do get into them, the surgeon has discovered that he can prevent putrefaction, and so attempts and carries to a successful issue achievements of surgery not dreamt of in former ages. From fictions of imagination to facts of observation—

such has been the history of the coming into being and of the stable growth of medical knowledge, as of other natural knowledge; and such, without doubt, is the prospective path of progress in those nebulous regions of nature where the supernatural has not yet been resolved into positive knowledge. New developments of thought and new powers over nature have invariably followed the invention of instruments which carried the action of the senses into provinces hitherto impenetrable by them.

(*b*) Next in order to the want of means of observation is the want of opportunities of observation.

It is obvious that he who has not the opportunity is practically as ill placed for arriving at a sound conclusion as he who has not the means of observing; to want the opportunity is to want the use of means. The miracle takes place easily when those who witness it are forbidden, either by external hindrance or by the sometimes stronger barrier of internal prohibitive scruple, to make a thorough and exact examination of all the circumstances attending its occurrence. It admits of no doubt, as Voltaire wittily remarked, that magic words are capable of destroying a whole flock of sheep if the incantation be accompanied with a sufficient dose of arsenic; and, after the event, there will be no doubt of the miracle in

the mind of the awe-stricken observer who has not seen more of the performance than the magic ceremonies. A person may rise from the grave after being buried for some days (as the Indian fakir does) when means are not scrupulously taken to ensure adequate observation that he is buried completely; and witnesses shall vouch solemnly that they have seen the thing happen whose sincerity as witnesses is as unquestionable as their incompetence as observers.* A credible eye-witness in any such matter is a witness who is not only qualified by natural aptitude and acquired training to make the special observation, but who possesses the means, uses all the expedients, and exhausts the opportunities of investigation. Many miracles have taken place in times past, as the miraculous liquefaction of the blood of St.

* A collection of cases of the kind, obtained directly from, and vouched for by, British officers who had been eye-witnesses of them, is given by Mr. Braid in his "Observations on Trance or Human Hybernation" (1850). In one case the man was buried for six weeks; in another for ten days, the grave being strictly guarded. But the result is disastrous when the proper precautions are not taken to make the miracle a success. For example, a weaver, who undertook to remain buried during the whole period of the Mahometan fast, was dead when taken out. And a Mahometan priest, who, in order to increase his reputation for sanctity, dug for himself a small cave underground, into which he retired, the top of the cave being then covered with boards and earth, was taken out dead, although he had taken the proper precaution to put a hollow bamboo through the covering in order to prevent suffocation. (*The Medical Jurisprudence of India*, p. 656, by Dr. Norman Chevers.)

Januarius takes place annually still, because the true causes of the event were not rigorously looked for in a thoroughly sceptical spirit. The difficulty in such cases is not to prevent adequate observation; the difficulty is to stir men to it. The event strikes the mind with an agreeable awe, wonder winning assent; but it is a pain and labour to hold assent in abeyance, and to set to work earnestly to make a scrupulous and tedious examination of all the antecedent and accompanying conditions of its occurrence.

Why does wonder win assent? First, because wonder, like other emotions, craves for and embraces gladly that which is agreeable to it and fitted to increase it. Secondly, because man, being in relations of knowledge with so small a part of nature compared with the vast extent thereof lying beyond any such relations, but with which nevertheless he is in relations of being, feels instinctively that there are many more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in his philosophy; wherefore his natural attitude of mind is that of awe-struck humility and vague apprehension of unforeseen events. This humble and anxious mood of helpless expectance is taken advantage of and imposed upon by the miracle and the miracle-monger—the more easily the more ignorant the individual—and intimidated belief, without any resource of knowledge behind it, is overwhelmed by

bold assertion. If an event happen mysteriously—and where there is next to no knowledge of the general laws of nature, most things must happen mysteriously —and especially when it happens under the auspices of those who are credited with a secret communion with the supernatural, what is a mind prepared by a disposition of anxious awe and urged instinctively to fix itself in some definite notional apprehension to do but to wonder and believe? It is not qualified to search out the causes and conditions of the occurrence; and it dares not itself approach and directly question those dread mysterious powers of which an interposing and interested priesthood, claiming the sacred office of indispensable mediator, professes to interpret the wishes, to assuage the wrath, to conciliate the favour. Thus the interests of those who profit by ignorance and the fears of the trembling dupes combine to prohibit inquiry and to keep up the mystery. Moreover, this also has to be taken into account, that the number of opportunities in the world for coincidences to occur is practically infinite; that very singular and striking ones, well fitted to make a strong impression of mysterious fatality, do occur from time to time; and that the imposing authority of these extraordinary coincidences operates undesignedly, or is designedly used, to strengthen the opinion and feeling of supernatural agency.

(*c*) The third cause of error of observation may be set down as the want of the habit of observation.

A want of habit is really the want of the capacity of observation; for although one person has a better natural aptitude to observe than another, yet no one can observe well in any province of nature without training by practice any more than he can dance well without having had practical lessons in dancing. Habit is acquired faculty, which means function-made structure—structural knowledge, in fact—and thereafter the automatic and easy performance of acts which were performed at first only with conscious labour and by gradually perfecting efforts. Exact observation in any special province of science implies the organized power and aptitude to bring, on all necessary occasions, related ideas to bear upon the subject under observation, so as to illume it in all its aspects; and this, not with labouring consciousness, but almost automatically. Not only must the related ideas have been acquired by observation and reflection, but the habit of applying them, which is power of attention, must have been developed by practice. It is the direct intending of mind to the object, as with a reflex grasp, whereby this is apprehended firmly: an internal power which serves and in a sense constrains in all cases, even when the subject is not itself fitted to kindle a particular

interest. Withal must be conjoined therewith a habit of strict mental veracity, that is to say, a sincere resolution to see the thing as it is on all occasions, at whatever cost to prejudice or feeling, and not to go a step in assent beyond the measure of the evidence—a heart as well as an eye for the truth. So the best habit of mind for the discovery of truth is formed.

Here fitly we may bestow a brief consideration on the nature of attention. Psychologists commonly use the term as if they meant by it a separate faculty of the mind which it had the power of setting to work or not; and even those among them who think of attention as the direction of consciousness in a particular channel, imply a sort of abstract power of thus turning consciousness at will wherever its services may be wanted. The preliminary question which they ought rightly to consider is whether there is any general faculty of attention at all—whether such a supposed faculty is not a mere notion; whether there are not actually as many particular attentions as there are particular subjects of attention; whether, therefore, attention is anything more than a particular attitude of mind, or of that portion of the mind which is active on the particular occasion. Then, also, in due course of reflection, it might appear that the mind has no more power of being brought to bear on a subject by a preliminary direction of consciousness than the

body has of leaping a ditch by sending its shadow before it. If, in such case, its shadow does chance to go before it, owing to the sun's relative place in the heavens at the time, it does so, not from any motion of its own, but because it is propelled by the already moving body, and moves forward only and exactly in proportion as this moves. So most probably is it with the direction of consciousness as a process of attention. Let any one who is suffering the acute pain of a bad toothache have his body burned with a red-hot iron, he will not any longer feel his toothache; however great his power of attention, he will not be able to attend to that pain, for the greater pain will usurp his consciousness. Beneath the mental there is an essentially connected physical process; and in the precedent order of events there the result must plainly be just as necessary as the disappearance of one mode of physical energy when it is converted into another mode of energy.

Let two persons of equal general understanding read the same book, the one of whom is interested in the subject of it and has made a pursuit of its study, while the other knows and cares little about the subject—how easy the power of attention in the one case! how difficult in the other! and how many more and deeper meanings do the words suggest and convey to the former than to the latter! The one

can see the principles, follow the conclusions, perceive the relations, foresee the objections, which the words suggest; to the other they are little more than dead words awakening no such subtile and complex responses, seeds sown on unsuitable ground, which remain dry and unfruitful there. That is to say, that when the spur of an interest in the subject can be applied, attention is awakened instantly, and the least hint of a meaning in the phenomena eagerly seized. No exertion of will made in order to compel attention to an uninteresting subject can equal the attraction with which an interesting subject holds it against the will. Thus it is that a person is able to observe acutely in a matter which affects his interests keenly, who seems unable to observe at all where his feelings are not engaged. A savage is minutely and intelligently observant of the scarcely perceptible signs by which to find his way through the pathless forest, who could not to the end of his life make much less difficult observations which were not solicited by his needs.* How, indeed, can there be a response within

* It is a common opinion, which is not without some foundation in reason, that the female mind is remarkably insusceptible to the force of the cool arguments by which the right and wrong of a matter in which it is keenly interested are dispassionately set forth; but it is particularly susceptible to the reasons that are congenial to feelings, and exhibits, therefore, a marvellously acute and seemingly instinctive intuition in a case where the right feeling in relation to the object or circumstances fitly informs or, so to speak, attunes the mind.

to the impression from without when there is nothing within that is in relation of congenial vibration with that which is without? Inattention in such case is insusceptibility; and if this be complete, then to demand attention is very much like demanding of the eye that it should attend to sound-waves, and of the ear that it should attend to light-waves.

In order to have an interest in a subject it is necessary that there be an attraction to it, either by reason of native organization of brain, as this has been inherited, or by reason of acquired organization, as this has been moulded by education and developed by the special interests and experiences of life; attractive interest thus implying an apt structuralization, inherited or acquired. That so many persons should have so many interests and attractions in common is inevitable, seeing that they are similarly constituted, born and bred in similar circumstances, fashioned in similar moulds of experience, and live a common social life; but inasmuch as there are manifold special pursuits, and numberless varieties of experiences in the inexhaustible conditions which nature, social and physical, presents, it results that various minds have various special interests, the main lines of these special developments following the original natural aptitudes of the particular brain. It is these innate differences of mental organization which make

attention comparatively easy to one person, even from his earliest days, in a case where it may be difficult to another, and so, by an elective affinity, determine and direct the development of those leading faculties into the maturity of which the mind grows. Obviously, then, attention is nowise so purely voluntary and abstract a matter as common psychological language implies.

There is a certain convenience in describing attention as of two kinds—namely, (*a*) voluntary and (*b*) automatic, according as the power by which it is applied comes mainly from behind (is a *vis a tergo* pushing it to the subject) or as it comes from in front (is a *vis a fronte* drawing it to the subject); for the distinction corresponds to certain broad features of its exercise. But it is not an exact and deep-reaching division, seeing that intermediate instances make a gradual transition from automatic to voluntary function. Every act of attention, be it seemingly the most voluntary, presupposes an antecedent interest or attraction. When a person resolutely fixes his attention, by a strong and sustained effort of will, on a subject which has little interest to him, he does it, not directly and independently, but indirectly and intermediately through means of related ideas which, having become his by previous experience, have an interest for him. Brought in face

of the object or phenomenon, he does not straightway pass it by without further notice, but attends to and observes it: why? For the reason that, occurring amongst phenomena in which he is interested in some degree—whereby, in fact, he is provoked to notice it at all in the first instance—he deliberately asks himself what relations it has to them, if it has any, or what relations it has not to them, if it has none; so he arouses attention to it.* In the one case it draws and fixes his notice by help of reinforcing ideas, they radiating their light upon it, as

* The Chinese owe their numerous discoveries in agriculture to their eminently observant character in such matters, in which their greatest men, and even their emperors, are interested. The following example shows well the difference between seeing and observing—simply seeing and seeing intelligently. The celebrated emperor Khang-hi was walking in some rice-fields one day, when he happened to notice a rice-plant that had already come into ear; it rose above all the rest, and was already ripe, although it had only been planted six months, and the harvest was not expected till the ninth. "I had it gathered and brought to me; the grain was very fine and full, and I was induced to keep it as an experiment, and see whether it would in the following year retain this precocity; and, in fact, it did. All the plants that proceeded from it came into ear before the ordinary time, and yielded their harvest in the sixth moon. Every year has multiplied the produce of the preceding, and now for thirty years it has been the rice served on my table. . . . It is the only kind that can ripen north of the Great Wall, where the cold begins very early and ends very late; but in the provinces of the south, where the climate is milder, and the soil more fertile, it is easy to obtain two harvests a year from it; and it is a sweet consolation to me to have procured this advantage for my people." (Abbé Huc's *Chinese Empire*, vol. ii. p. 311.)

it were, so as to make it and its affinities bright and distinct in consciousness; in the other case it attracts and fixes notice through the interest which there is in demonstrating the absence of relations where relations seemed to be, being focussed in consciousness by the aid of ideas with which it claims affinities that it is not really entitled to claim.

Always do we find in scientific inquiry that the bold and positive enunciation of a wrong theory is more effectual to provoke attention and examination than the quiet indication of a probability or the modest suggestion of a directing question, albeit the latter is far the more sound and honest course when a positive statement or theory is not warranted by the state of knowledge. By assigning to the subject of inquiry relations which it has not, it obtains an introduction and secures an interest which it would not have were it left unrelated; and the inquiries thereby provoked, though they end at last in exposing its falsity, prove none the less useful sometimes, either to discover new truths or to test and strengthen the foundations of old truths. This also has further to be taken into account—that, once an idea not entirely false has obtained settlement in the mind, it becomes, seeing that all things are bound together nearly or remotely in the universe, a centre to which associations form gradually, as increasing experience widens

and sharpens observation and extends and develops reflection; the unrelated thus becoming by degrees more and more related, and in the end, perhaps, the centre of a group of relations that prove to be of the greatest service in bridging a chasm of thought between separate groups of ideas. It is like bringing into complete and regular intercommunication, by means of a new railway with its suitable network of branches, separate parts of the country which, though well served with their own railways respectively, have been cut off from one another hitherto by the absence of means of direct communication; or, to make use of what is, perhaps, a more appropriate simile in this connection, it is like a new conception happily occurring during the contemplation of some mechanical invention, by the application of which, clumsy contrivances being got rid of, it is usefully simplified and immensely improved.

Here may fitly be made this reflection—that a new invention of any kind by which human powers are largely increased is an actual improvement upon nature, a further development of it through human nature, for thus relations that cover a vast field and are widely separate in things are brought into a narrow compass and a close proximity in ideas; they are collected where they can be manipulated in different combinations and interactions which they would not

take spontaneously in nature, being thus interrogated and tried and adapted experimentally to definite ends. It is the concentration, so to speak, of extensive into intensive, the getting of quantity and quality in miniature—gravitation and other natural forces, and the accumulated labours of successive generations of men, within the compass of a small machine. As the mathematician uses algebraic symbols, combining and arranging them according to the relations of the symbols themselves, without thinking of their meaning during the process, to work out results which, when achieved, he can easily translate into thought and use deductively; so do we use ideas of the mind independently of external things and their relations, making and unmaking all sorts of combinations and interactions of them, to work out results which, when they proceed from a sound basis after a right method, are found sometimes to be valuable deductions that guarantee prediction and forestall observation. We obtain a stock of sound notions by induction from true observation of things, and go on then to derive, from the manipulation of the notions themselves in reflection, theories or deductions which, when tested by application, are found to be true of things not ever observed actually. It is certain that a man must think as well as see in order to make his seeing of any use, for he sees not with his eye, but through it;

happy, therefore, is he who, when he begins to see, has in his mind a true theory, explicit or implicit. It is not impossible that he may sometimes be beholden mightily to a happy prejudice.

No more need be said now in order to prove how much in all cases attention, whether voluntary or automatic, owes to training and habit: not the habit of observing one thing or doing one thing exclusively, whereby men become automatic and go on in unvarying rounds of thought and feeling, like so many organic machines, falling really into a routine of not observing or not doing other things, but the habit of applying the mind intently to any subject which it may be called upon to examine—the habit, that is, of holding in hand all related ideas and using them to throw their light upon it. So only will that habit which is the power of attention grow and become easy. A good habit for the conscientious inquirer to form would, perhaps, be a sceptical habit of inquiring why a common observation may not be a true observation, an accepted conclusion not a sound conclusion; seeing that it is the custom of opinion to descend unquestioned from generation to generation, and many things continue to be believed only because they have once been said authoritatively, out of a passive acquiescence in received opinion and a disinclination to question what has been sanctioned

by time and authority. Be that as it may, when we consider the number and developments of the sciences, how much time and pains must be given to master the details of a science, and how little time and pains the majority of persons can give to other than the common business of their lives and to providing the means of subsistence, it is obvious enough how natural and general bad observation and error of thought must be. The multitude will always take its opinions from custom and tradition and on the authority of others, in matters that lie altogether outside its sphere of thought and action; but even in matters of common belief, which any one might test for himself, most persons get and hold their opinions in the same mechanical way, for they are ignorant of the proofs on which they rest and by which they are established, know not the alphabet of observation, have not the least notion what proof is, neither contribute value to an opinion nor guarantee value in it by reason of their holding it. Hence it is that, in complex matters of research, where certitude is unattainable and judgment has to be held in suspense, and especially in the cases where urgent personal interests demand the stay and support of something definite, being impatient of uncertainty and eager for definite assurance, they take refuge in dogmatic authority of some kind or other—in revealers of the

will of the supernatural, in omen-mongers, in quacks and charlatans, and in the like pretenders to secret and certain communion with the counsels of creation.*

It is too little considered by those who exult in the modern diffusion of knowledge and brag of the enlightenment of the age, on how very small a minority of men the boasted progress depends actually; how entirely the intellectual possessions of the race have been gained and are maintained by the few, and how little real knowledge the vast majority has; how vast an organization of hostile superstition is ever fighting against progress and labouring to arrest it. The extinction of a few hundred persons in a generation who keep the torch of knowledge burning in Christendom might easily throw the world back into intellectual barbarism in the course of two or three generations. So also with the aspirations and the endeavour to realize a high moral ideal: it is not the many, but a select few, who have kept that flame

* The medical practitioner who treats his patient with unfailing decision and dogmatic assurance inspires more confidence often, although he may know little or nothing of medicine, than the most learned physician who betrays any of the uncertainty and hesitation which a real knowledge of the case perhaps demands. Hence the great success of the charlatan, who, perceiving that men insist upon being humoured, beguiled, and led, acts the part demanded of him. He does good too sometimes, since a ray of inspired hope or a gleam of joy may hearten the patient much, animating his organic energies beneficially.

alive in the human heart through the ages; and they have done it by spending themselves with self-sacrificing devotion for the good of their kind. Benefactors and often at the same time martyrs of humanity, it is they who create and keep fresh a social atmosphere by which the morals of the many are inspired and sustained; these for the most part rest only on the frail structures of tradition, custom, law, and opinion; the strength of which, lying more in conventional opinion than in foundation of nature, is sometimes discovered with dismay, when it is severely tested, to be much less than on all hands it is tacitly assumed to be. When the startling revelation of the actual weakness is made, there arises loud social clamour on all sides at what is called an extraordinary and unnatural event, followed soon by an eager and general self-conservative conspiracy silently to cover and ignore it, and by indignant reprobation of any one who, wanting in respect for conventional reticences, frankly exposes the sore and expounds its significance. A just appreciation of these truths might properly abate the surprise which outbreaks of superstitious credulity, of heartless selfishness, of gross sensuality, occasion from time to time in civilized countries; for it is not necessary to make a very deep cut into the culture of civilization in order to discover its underlying ignorance, selfishness, and brutality.

(*d*) Under the head of *bias* may be included a number of very active causes of fallacies of observation and reasoning. They are such as have their origin in the feelings—in the various affections, wishes, interests, passions, prejudices, fears, and tempers of human nature.

The common notion is that men get their opinions through the understanding and hold them because they are based solidly on sound reason. Far from it: the understanding is certainly one avenue of opinion, but an avenue more open and used, though disavowed, is through the feelings; the opinions so obtained demanding only from reason so much of its help as serves to excuse and support them. A fundamental fact of man's nature, as of all living nature, is the desire to be happy, and the impulse to pursue and embrace those things which are agreeable; the consequence of which is a natural inclination to embrace and believe opinions that suit with desires, and to reject and disbelieve opinions that go contrary to desires. To contemplate a subject in the pure white light of knowledge, without any intermixture of feeling to colour perception, is pretty nigh impossible; and the stronger the feeling which enters into the reflection, the more powerful it is as a factor in the determination of belief. It is always a far more effective way of persuasion to awaken sympathetic

feeling for the weakest argument than to present an irrefutable argument to an unsympathetic mind, and the most successful way to compel belief is to kindle the congenial passion. A strong passion, by securing beforehand the suitable disposition in the individual, predisposes him to embrace and believe what is fitted to excite and feed it. How can assimilation fail to take place when the impression from without falls into such apt unison with the activity within? how not agree when they are so mutually agreeable? A timid person readily believes that which greatly alarms him; a suspicious person, that which jumps with his mood of suspicion; an angry person, that which seems to justify his anger to himself; a jealous person, whatsoever is in the least adapted to provoke jealousy. Always the emotion attracts the congenial and reinforcing, repels the uncongenial and opposing ideas. It is only afterwards, when its tremors of activity subside, and consciousness is released from attendance on it and its ministering ideas, that the uncongenial have a chance of being attended to.

The condition of mind ideally best for the search of truth would, of course, be a condition so free from every disturbing passion as to admit of a pure love of truth for truth's sake. But that is not a possible state of perfection. A pure lover of truth, which everybody desires or professes to be, and which

nobody is, would be an abstraction, not a real person; just as truth itself is. In any and every case what concerns us is the particular lover of the particular truth on the particular occasion. And when we thus come down from the simplicity of free abstractions to deal with the complexity of concrete individuals, we find that each person is himself, and not any one else, having his special likings and dislikings, his many moods and inclinations; that these differ in different persons, in numberless relations to the multitudinous qualities of objects and changes of events, and even in the same person at different times and places; and that the notion of what is adequate proof to constrain assent is at bottom much affected by the personal peculiarity or idiosyncrasy. To every one in the end the world is what he thinks it, and certitude what he believes of it at the time. In no case of a concrete conclusion is the assent, perhaps, a pure rational assent; that is, an assent into which no surplusage of assurance enters from some other affection than the love of truth. The passions occasion so many coloured refractions of the white ray of truth; they are necessarily inconsistent with the unity of it.

In view, then, of the manifold varieties of human feelings, their extremely subtle and devious workings, and of the numerous and complex circumstances in which they operate, it is obviously impossible

to enumerate and set forth at length the divers secret and circuitous ways in which they act to bias observation and thought, or to construct a detailed grammar of persuasion, or a systematic logic of feeling, which shall set forth fully and in detail how so to act in relation to them respectively as to obtain assent. It is a sort of knowledge, however, which the acute man of the world, who makes use of men for his purposes, manages in some measure to acquire instinctively. It will suffice here to note their general effects, without attempting to pursue their special operations in the intimate recesses of individual character; to consider the effects of the main stream of emotion, without embarking on a hopeless investigation of the multitudinous and tortuous channels of its course.

It is in the emotion caused by a natural event which is of so rare occurrence as to excite wonder, and of so extraordinary a nature as to be thought supernatural, that we have the reason of the ease with which superstitious explanations of it are accepted. Observation is impossible, and the mind, loosed from its moorings in familiar experience, drifts without bearings for a time, bewildered, overawed, and tremulously apprehensive; in a very apt mood of intimidation, therefore, to believe anything with respect to the extraordinary occurrence. Is not

apprehensive expectation the natural mental mood of a being who from his birth has to fight for his life against hostile powers and in the end to lose it? There is a self-conservative eagerness to make the overwhelming indefiniteness into something definite, to attach it somehow to the mental being; for so only is it possible to think and act in relation to it. Imagination is easily believed, therefore, when it goes actively to work, as it does instantly, to fill the void with superstitious explanations that are in keeping with the state of feeling and intellectual development of the race at the time and place. Take note, in this relation, how wonder and astonishment in the vulgar mind at the narration of some extraordinary event dispose to belief in it; mentally as well as physically there is gaping wonder, open-mouthed to swallow the pleasing marvel; and how prone is the narrator himself, flattered by the interest and admiration which his tale evokes, or seduced by the desire to provoke astonishment, to embellish its features and to exaggerate its points, and to end by believing his own exaggerations! Certainly stories of the supernatural at the present day owe a main part of their authority to this cause of fallacy—to wonder-struck assent and inexact narration.*

* No ghost stories are more striking, more widespread, and apparently better attested, than those of the visible apparitions of

In the natural effect of an emotion to attract to itself congenial ideas, getting strength and support

persons at the moment of death to friends or others who may be hundreds of miles distant. The writers of an article on "Visible Apparitions" in the *Nineteenth Century* of July, 1884, who are secretaries of the ghost-seeking society, relate a case of the kind communicated to them by Sir Edmund Hornby, late Chief Judge of the Supreme Consular Court of China and Japan, who describes himself as a lawyer by education, family, and tradition, wanting in imagination, and no believer in miracles.

It was his habit to allow reporters to come to his house in the evening to get his written judgments for the next day's paper. On this occasion he had written out his judgment and left it with the butler for the reporter, who was expected to call for it. Having gone to bed and to sleep, he was awakened soon by a tap at the door, which, when he took no notice, was repeated. In reply to his call "come in," the reporter solemnly entered and asked for the judgment. Thereupon ensued a dialogue between Sir E. Hornby—who referred him again and again to the butler, protesting against the unwarrantable intrusion—and the reporter, who persisted in his earnest requests for the judgment. Impressed at last by his solemn earnestness, and fearful of awakening his wife (who had slept soundly during all the energetic and animated dialogue), Sir Edmund gave him the gist of the judgment, which he appeared to take down in shorthand, after which he apologized for his intrusion and withdrew. It was then just half-past one. When Lady Hornby awoke, as she did immediately, the whole incident was related to her.

Next day when Sir Edmund entered the Court, the usher announced to him the sudden death of the reporter, some time between one and half-past one. The cause of death, as ascertained by a formal inquest, was heart-disease. The poor man had not left his house the night before.

Here then is a precise and circumstantial story related by a person of eminence and ability, accustomed to weigh evidence, and confirmed (for the writers say so) by his wife. Naturally it attracted much attention, and much jubilant attention from those who were specially interested in ghosts and apparitions. The *Spectator* saw in it, I believe, incontestable proof of the reality of the spiritual world. Amongst

from them, and reacting to give strength and support to them, we perceive how it is that it may contribute much to the success or failure of an enterprise started under its auspices. The hope and belief of success is often half the battle of success; the fear and foreboding of failure, the effective means to invite failure. Coleridge, speaking of the retreat of Napoleon from

others it attracted the attention of Mr. Balfour, the editor of the *North China Herald*, who was well acquainted with Sir Edmund and the reporter alluded to. In a letter to the *Nineteenth Century* (November, 1884), this gentleman asks the editor to compare the story with the following remarks:—

"1. Sir Edmund says Lady Hornby was with him at the time, and subsequently awoke. I reply that no such person was in existence. Sir Edmund's second wife had died two years previously, and he did not marry again till three months *after* the event he relates.

"2. Sir Edmund mentions an inquest on the body. I reply, on the authority of the coroner, that no inquest was ever held.

"3. Sir Edmund's story turns upon the judgment of a certain case, which was to be delivered next day, the 20th January, 1875. There is no record of any such judgment in the *Supreme Court and Consular Gazette*, of which I am now editor.

"4. Sir Edmund says that the editor died at one in the morning. This is wholly inaccurate; he died between eight and nine A.M., after a good night's rest."

The editor of the *Nineteenth Century* having submitted Mr. Balfour's letter to Sir E. Hornby, subjoins that gentleman's rejoinder, in which, after accusing Mr. Balfour of want of good feeling and taste in not having written to him privately, instead of amusing the public at his expense, he practically, though ungraciously, admits the whole case against him.

It is probable that similar stories of the kind would collapse in a similar manner, were they tested properly by independent observation and inquiry, and were some one willing to take the trouble to make the inquiry and, having made it, to take the trouble of contradicting and exposing them.

Moscow, says that the Russians baffled his imperial forces because they, having faith in St. Nicholas, were inaccessible to the imaginary forces which were bred of the superstition of his destinies; and that the English in the Peninsula overcame the real, because they set at defiance and had heard of only to despise the imaginary, powers of the great emperor.* An ill omen at the commencement of an important undertaking is apt to fulfil its dark prognostication and to establish its own credit, by the depressing and discouraging feelings and notions which it begets, while a good omen, inspiring hope and energy, with their corresponding sanguine notions and fertile combinations of notions, supplies much of the machinery of its own fulfilment. There was, then, an induction of real experience in the superstition that the omen was a divine forecast which it was a man's business to understand and respect: on so much base of truth it rested.

In like manner, prophecies, presentiments, imprecations, magic incantations, predictions of witchcraft, and the like, have helped to work their own accomplishment: a person has died, and that not simply as an extraordinary coincidence, on the day it was predicted or he had a presentiment he should die; an

* *Lay Sermons.* The Duke of Wellington said something of the kind of himself. See Croker's *Memoirs.*

incantation has taken fatal effect when the victim has known of it and feared it; a curse has been a self-fulfilling fate when it has worked powerfully on the imagination of its subject; a physician who inspires faith and hope in his patient does more to cure him sometimes by a few harmless simples than another, unable to produce any such inspiriting mental effect, can do with the most fit and costly remedies. Prediction is, in the nature of things, a vastly different thing when applied to human events from what it ever is when applied to physical events: in the latter it is a passive process of simple foresight; in the former it may so work on the mind as to become the powerful agent of its own fulfilment.

Once mankind fell into the belief that events were pre-omened in any way from on high, there was no association of them too trivial to become the occasion of the prediction of good or bad fortune; ignorant men sought and found omens everywhere, and wiser men made clever use of them to minister to their credit and profit; the essential factor of the process not being the trivial occurrence that was associated with a good or bad result, but the mental state of animating hope or paralyzing fear which it occasioned.* Here, then, we behold an instance of a

* Hence various modes of *divination*—that is, of deducing inferences with regard to the future from one or other of the sources

mighty edifice of error built on the basis of defective observation, which, overlooking entirely the real cause of events, drew from imagination a plentiful supply of fictitious causes.

In the natural pride and impatience of human nature, which rebels against the insurmountable limitations of knowledge, and disdains and dislikes the humility of the method of its attainment by patiently and painfully conforming to facts, there is a deep and enduring source of error. Man would fain be above nature, not as its culminating blossom, but as something essentially apart from it in his highest qualities—a being created to govern and use it for his ends and for whom it was created—instead of, as he is actually, a part of it that develops from and in and for it, and commands only by obeying. He cannot quietly wait for the slow growth of knowledge in him through gradually made closer inter-

sanctioned by superstition. *Oneiromancy* was the mode of prophecy founded on dreams; *cheiromancy*, the art of predicting a man's fortune by the lines of his hand; *ornithomancy*, the mode of predicting events from the flight of birds; *necromancy*, the prophecy founded on the answer obtained from spirits of the dead. And long after these modes of divining had lost their credit, recourse was had to the opening of some book, such as Virgil or the Bible, at random, and accepting as omens the words that chanced first to meet the eye (*Sortes Virgilianæ* and *Sortes Biblicæ*). Pious persons at one time found mighty comfort and help in such use of the Bible, of which they have been pitilessly bereaved by modern theologians; they perceived in the chance-passages the intimations of divine guidance.

actions with things, but is ever tempted to anticipate sound knowledge by speculative intuitions from the high and special personal station which he assumes for himself, or by revelations which he claims and professes to have from a higher source than sense. Experience is neglected or ignored where experience ought to be rigorously made and sincerely incorporated; an arrogant impatience of research allowed to prevail where the difficulties of observation make a humble patience of painstaking search necessary to the discovery of truth; a supreme confidence in self granted full swing of imaginative invention where a modest subordination of self is alone suited to win Nature's confidence and to discover her secrets. As he once declared the earth to be the centre of the universe round which the whole system of the heavens turned, persecuting as blasphemers those who ventured to call in question the absurd dogma, so man still imagines himself to be the supreme aim of the universe of things, the end for which the whole creation has groaned and travailed through countless ages, and groans and travails still. Imagining that of himself, of what magnitude of error is he incapable? From such a mental station, and in a mood of feeling so alien from nature and so adverse to the method and aim of true knowledge of it, it is not possible for him to see things truly as they are.

He cannot help going wrong, mentally as well as physically, while he is in nature and not wholly and sincerely of it. To maintain himself on the pinnacle of this unnatural eminence he must needs claim, in some sort of supersensual intuition or actual divine inspiration, a special source of knowledge befitting his conceit of himself, and assume his aspirations to contain the pledge of their future fulfilment. As he creates God in the image of his understanding, so he creates a future life for himself after the desires of his heart, his egoism here craving a corresponding satisfaction hereafter.

With the individual as with the race, an undisciplined egoism acts to fix a false mental standpoint, and so to vitiate observation and to lead thought astray. Each one loves his own opinions, because they are his own, better than the common opinions in which he has no sense of private possession, just as he dislikes not such odours of his own body as would be most offensive coming from another person's body. There is always the steady bias which springs necessarily from the fact of individuality. But it is when self-esteem is irritated actively into the flame of some passion, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, pride, and the like, that it forms the strongest bar to the admission of pure truth. These passions, being constituent parts of human nature, cannot be elimi-

nated from it entirely; they produce their vitiating effects in observation and thought, whatever the province of human labour; it is in vain to expect to get rid of them, even where they have the least scope —either in the high regions of philosophy or in the dry regions of science. One philosopher or scientific observer, jealous of the reputation of another who is engaged in a similar field of study, sees no truth or merit in the discovery made by him, and rejects it with contempt, though it be a very excellent discovery. In such mood of scornful antipathy he may remain as long as he lives, blinded by prejudice. But if the discovery makes way by growth of the evidence in its favour, so that it cannot be ignored, then he appropriates it more or less consciously, and persuades himself that there was nothing new in it, or that he has come to it independently and owes no obligation in the matter. If the progress of knowledge depended upon the labours of two or three persons who had to work in the same provinces of inquiry, it is quite probable that it would come to an early standstill, so great is the impeding and perverting play of passion. But happily, as things are, among the multitude of workers in different places and countries and times, the impeding jealousy or other prejudicial passion of one inquirer is met somewhere by an active counter-prejudice which has a

neutralizing effect, and so out of the conflict of passions truth comes by its own. In any case the judgment of foreign nations and future ages commonly puts matters right at last.

Observation is not less seriously vitiated by sympathetic emotion, although in a different way. Consider how actively admiration, pity, and love predispose respectively to see what is admirable, to find what is deserving, to believe what is good, in the object of the feeling. Love is proverbially blind because, seeing in its object that which it loves and desires to see, it cannot see that which contradicts the bent of its passion; the lover infatuated because, transported out of his reason and seduced out of his senses by his passion, his observation and judgment are fatuous. Hence Plato justly included love under one sort of mania, and Shakespeare soberly describes the lover as of imagination compact with the lunatic and the poet. "Pity me not," the Ghost exclaims in *Hamlet*, "but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold," wisely considering or instinctively feeling that pity was incompatible with exact attention and sound judgment. When the true Messiah foretold that false messiahs or prophets should arise in the latter days and work miracles, he foresaw and declared that they should lead many astray, because astonishment notoriously precludes

critical observation and judgment, and makes belief easy. In the main it is true that the grosser the admiring wonder the coarser is the deception which escapes detection. In reference to one being only in the whole history of mankind have the deepest love of His person, the utmost pity for His sufferings, and supreme admiration of His self-devotion been supposed by all Christendom to exist without any effect to bias judgment concerning His character and the events of His mission. If bias has been so impotent, it is as much a miracle, perhaps, as anything which occurred during His mission.

It is notorious how strong, subtle, and pervading a bias is given to observation and thought by wish, interest, or desire, and how hard a thing it is for the most judicial mind to go against its bias. The effect of a resolute and conscientious exercise of reason and will exactly to counteract such bias would almost certainly be to carry the judgment, by the counter-bias, some way in the opposite direction beyond the straight line of truth. When two persons who have been witnesses of the same transaction give, on oath in a court of justice, rival accounts of it, that are inconsistent or contradictory, as not seldom happens, it is not usually that either of them is saying designedly that which is not, but it is that each has been strongly biased by his wishes, interests, fears,

or feelings, and has seen, so as to realize, only that which was agreeable to them, or, in remembering the circumstances, has called effectively to mind only so much as was countenanced by them. The agreements with his mood have made a vivid impression and have remained with him; the disagreements therewith have made no impression, or so slight an impression that it has quickly passed away. Thus he has seen and thought what he wished, and embraced the conclusions which were grateful.

Whoso believes earnestly in the supernatural, and desires signs and wonders, willingly sees signs and wonders himself, and accepts easily the testimony of others as to their occurrence. Therefore, when it is objected to the sceptic, as an unanswerable argument, that men of unimpeachable veracity, who were in full possession of their senses, have solemnly testified that they have witnessed supernatural phenomena, he may properly, before dismissing his doubts and abandoning his reserve, call to mind and consider well the lesson of this indisputable and weighty fact—that two naturally veracious persons, both of whom cannot be right, will sincerely give nearly or flatly contradictory accounts of the same transaction, which they had equal means and opportunities of observing. This is, no doubt, a gross instance of manifest bias, but it is none the less suited to excite reflection on the mani-

fold finer instances of its permeating influence in daily life, in which it habitually acts with effect in various subtle and circuitous ways. For example: when any one propounds a question for an opinion, he almost inevitably seduces or irritates, and so prejudices, by his way of telling his story, although he endeavour to avoid comment and to be scrupulously fair; and even when he succeeds in confining himself to a plain narration of the facts, he discloses, in spite of himself, minute signs in his manner, in his tone of voice, in the expressions of his features, in his gestures or attitudes, which awaken responsive echoes of reinforcing or repelling feeling in his listener, by a more subtile physics than we can yet comprehend.

Is a supernatural event alleged to have taken place? the right initial attitude of mind to observe in regard to it is an attitude of sober scepticism, for so only will the tests applied to it and *all* the conditions of its occurrence be thorough and complete and rigorously enforced. The natural unwillingness to offend the piously cherished feelings of others in such case by pushing inquiry home, renders it very necessary that the inquirer should show no indulgence to his own feelings. He must begin his scrutiny in the spirit of the perfectly well-founded maxim that, while there is a strong antecedent improbability of a super-

natural event in any case, there is a strong antecedent probability of a bias in favour of wish in every case, and require the elimination or entire invalidation of so much of the weight of authority as the evidence owes to bias. Now, as this elimination is sometimes practically impossible, the only safe course, when it cannot be made, is to reject the observation; for it will be impossible to determine truly whether it is the observation of a real thing or only the realization of a pious wish of the observer.

It has always been a favourite argument of theological writers, which is still used as if it were incontestable, that the desire of man for a perfect life after death, in which his own failures and the failure of retribution and recompense in this life shall be made good, is a strong argument in favour of his immortality. The desire would not have been implanted in his heart, it is thought, were it not an instinctive yearning which was destined to have fruition. In the employment of this argument those who profit by it are in the habit of overstating the fact which serves as its basis in two ways: first, by ascribing a universality to the desire, which it has not; secondly, by supposing that, where the desire exists, it is a desire for a future life that shall be retributive. This, again, is not the fact, seeing that many savages who think of a future life have not the

least notion of retribution in it, but think of it as a continuance of the unequal dispensations of this life; the chief being a chief enjoying the good things, and the slave a slave suffering the evil things, there as here.

Let it be granted that the wish to rise again after death to a life eternal were universal, would that be in the least degree presumptive evidence of so momentous an event to come? Is human craving in that case proof of manifest destiny? or is it the merely barren utterance of human egoism? Does the desire of the heart contain and reveal an implicit certitude which the understanding can add nothing to if it concur with it, and take nothing from if it dissent from it? Does the wish to live for ever carry any more weight of assurance simply as a wish than there is in the wish to live to old age, which ninety-nine persons out of a hundred have, but which only a few of them live to have gratified, and fewer still are much gratified to have when they get it.

Instead of adding weight to the extrinsic evidence of a future life, of whatever value that may be, the immortal longing supplies a weight of intrinsic bias which ought, in conformity with the canons of right reasoning, to be subtracted from it. If it is not, the person is physically incapacitated from accurately observing and weighing the evidence; just as the

body or the part of a body engaged in the accomplishment of a particular skilful movement of adaptation is incapacitated thereby from executing another complex act of adaptation at the same time. The brain is not a single and simple organ acting wholly in each function; it is practically a confederation of organs in which, when one organ is in active function, another must be much or altogether in abeyance, not otherwise than as, in a council or parliament, while one member is speaking the rest must be silent. Every human being who has lived, or is living, or shall live on earth may be destined to live through all eternity somewhere and somehow, poorly inhabited as eternity then might be; but there must be weightier reasons to warrant the belief than the mere human wish, if the belief is not to take rank among those inventions of the imagination in which the heart, throbbing with the passionate impulse of organic life, seeks for a solace that is denied to it by the cold light of the understanding.

It is hardly possible to convey to those who have not made a study of the subject an adequate notion of the numerous and important events which have been seen to happen, not because they did actually happen, but because of the strong wish and belief that they would happen. The earnest expectation of the event excites a vivid idea or image of it, so

that the image, not the reality, is seen and observation falsified. For example, it was a firmly rooted superstition at one time that the corpse of a murdered person would bleed afresh when the murderer was brought into its presence and made to touch it, and the experiment was repeatedly made with the successful result of obtaining so conclusive a piece of damning evidence.* So late as the time when Dr. Cudworth wrote his learned treatise, it was the received opinion "that evil spirits or demons do sometimes really act upon the bodies of men by inflicting or augmenting bodily distempers or diseases." He entertained no doubt that some maniacal persons, who were really demoniacs, could discover secrets, declare things past and to come, and speak in languages which they had never learned; and he quotes in proof what he calls "an unquestionable instance" of a

* Two respectable clergymen, for example, swore at a trial in the time of Charles I. (1628–29) that the body having been taken out of the grave and laid on the grass, thirty days after death, and one of the parties accused of murder required to touch it, "the brain of the dead began to have a dew or gentle sweat arise on it, which increased by degrees till the sweat ran down in drops on the face; the brow turned to a lively flesh-colour, and the deceased opened one of her eyes and shut it again; and this opening of the eye was done three several times; she likewise thrust out the ring or marriage finger three times, and pulled it in again; and the finger dropped blood from it on the grass." In regard of any extraordinary event, one may safely conclude that it would be a greater miracle, and therefore a more unlikely explanation of it, to see a real miracle in it than to make a miracle of it through misseeing.

maniacal woman who, though she knew no language but her mother-tongue, spoke to a stranger who was an Armenian in Armenian, and foretold future events correctly.* It is well known that the circumstances following the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are differently narrated by the writers of the different Gospels, one point of signal disagreement being as to whether two angels were seen sitting in the empty sepulchre or whether only one sat there. Now, the person who is said to have seen the "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," was Mary Magdalene; a woman who, having once had seven devils cast out of her, we may justly suppose, if not to have been insane once, to have had that kind of nervous constitution, loosely compact and unstably balanced, in which a vivid idea easily attains to such an intensity and separateness as to be seen as an actual image. Running to the sepulchre early in the morning, in eager and anxious excitement, and finding the sepulchre open and the body of Christ gone, in fulfilment of His declaration that, after being delivered into the hands of men and killed, He should rise from the dead on the third day,† what more likely than that the agitated glance at the separate

* *Intellectual System*, ch. viii. p. 349.

† Matt. xvi. 21; Mark ix. 31; Luke ix. 22.

pieces of linen—"the linen clothes lying there, and the napkin that was about the head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself"—suggested the ideas, and the ideas the visible images, of *two* angels?* Thus, perhaps, might be explained one discrepancy in the story, were discrepancies of detail of any real moment in the descriptions of an event unparalleled in human experience, transcending human explanation, confounding human apprehension.

It is obvious, from the foregoing exposition, that want of opportunities and means, want of habit and training, and want of sincerity owing to one or more of the manifold causes of bias, are the three great causes of bad observation—of the overlooking of essential conditions or factors of the problem whereby premature and erroneous conclusions, positive and negative, are based upon insufficient data. A strong positive conclusion from incomplete data is more likely to be corrected soon than a strong negative conclusion from incomplete data; it must needs run often against the tests of experience, and so provoke scrutiny; whereas a negative conclusion may

* It is certain that the disciples themselves were not convinced by the testimony, for the "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke xxiv. 7); and that John and Peter, who both entered the sepulchre, and found it empty, did not see the angels which Mary, staying there weeping, afterwards saw (John xx. 11, 12).

require a very wide, if not an exhaustive, experience of nature in order to make sure whether it is well founded or not. If the statement be made positively that a ghost walks regularly in a certain place at midnight, or that an immense sea-serpent, floating full many a rood, disports itself every night in the English Channel between Dover and Calais, it is not difficult to settle whether the statement is true or false; but if the assertion be made that a ghost never does walk because a ghost does not exist, being no more than a phantom of sickly imagination, or that the sea-serpent is a mere chimera, it is easy to object that the assertion is unwarrantably dogmatic, because human knowledge of nature is very limited. Always will it be open to the person who has not made himself acquainted with the method and results of such positive knowledge of nature as actually exists, and imbued his mind with its principles—who has not, in fact, had the opportunities, or used the means, or trained himself to the capacity of observing, and eliminated from his mind the bias of its prepossessions — to inveigh against the arrogant dogmatism and bigoted prejudice of those scientific students of nature who deny the apparitions of sea-serpents and of spiritual beings. In order to get entirely rid of this class of objection, it would be necessary, not only that the knowledge of nature

should be pretty nigh or completely exhaustive, but that everybody should have an exhaustive knowledge of it when it was complete. That is a consummation not to be looked for; in all time to come there will be, as in time past there has been, abundant room and occasion for the uninstructed exercise of imagination.

(*e*) The last cause of the vitiation of observation and thought to be noticed lies in the misuse and abuse of words: a common, deep, and wide-reaching cause of fallacies.

There is seemingly an inveterate proneness to believe that a word must mean an entity, when it may be the sign of an abstraction only; and that the same word must have the same meaning, when it may have very different meanings in different mouths or in the same mouth on different occasions. How widely different are the contents of meaning which the word "matter" actually has in the mind of a philosopher of to-day from what it had in the mind of a philosopher formerly, or has now in the mouth of the vulgar! Although the same word be used, the talk is not of the same thing, but of different things under the same name. In like manner, when the metaphysical psychologist and the physiological psychologist dispute about mind, the discussion is struck with barrenness from its inception, since they

do not really speak of the same thing; they have no common ground of inquiry; all the mass of experience and reflections which the one has accumulated are useless to the other, the language of them being infected by a theory of mind which is false or even unintelligible to him.

How much, or rather how little, is there actually in common between the early Christian, devoted member of a mean, despised, and persecuted sect in the midst of a hostile community, and the Christian of to-day? It is a contrast rather than a comparison of faiths, intellectually and morally, that we are in face of; the two beings, although professing the same religion and called by the same name, being no more like as concrete believers than two persons of entirely different religions and civilizations.

Language is the specialized expression or denotation by vocal sounds or by written signs—the muscular denomination, so to speak—of feelings, ideas, and their associations. Having been framed in accordance with vulgar experience, it necessarily stirs corresponding associations; oftentimes, therefore, it cannot be used scientifically in the vulgar sense when such use of it gives rise to inadequate or erroneous associations. How are men to obtain a new and true apprehension of a class of facts that have been misapprehended, when the language used to describe

them, implying and endorsing old and erroneous appreciation of them, inevitably evokes misleading associations? It is required to use the faulty instrument in such a way as if it had no fault in it, to accomplish that exact apprehension which, by very reason of that fault, it is not fitted to accomplish. Until new and truer associations have been formed in men's minds by the progress of related knowledge, it is impossible to have the new facts and relations appreciated rightly, and their language exactly apprehended and determined. There is nothing for it sometimes but to wait through generations until the right associations have been adequately developed, and the fit language framed to express them.

When an ingenious pioneer of thought puts forth a new theory which meets with no acceptance in his day, but which is revived and accepted generations after, he is credited only with having made a lucky guess, if he is not forgotten entirely, because only then has such a raising of the general level of knowledge and such development of language taken place as render full apprehension and exact expression of the theory possible. People cannot credit the discoverer with having known what he meant because it has taken them a hundred years to discover his meaning.* Not, it is true, without good

* And the truth, after all, sometimes is that they discover what

reason oftentimes, since it is too much the way of theory going before knowledge to use words vaguely, and the same word in different senses, and to construct systems of philosophy out of the indefinite, ambiguous, and equivocal manipulation of them; the real instruction furnished by such speculative systems being for the most part the instruction which they undesignedly yield as rich mines of confusions and fallacies of thought and language.

It is a common saying, which has been transformed into an axiom by frequent and confident repetition, that no nation, however savage or barbarous, has existed without some notion of a God; and the alleged fact is thereupon adduced as emphatic evidence of the existence of a God. But granting the

has been discovered before, perhaps some thousand years ago, and only dress it freshly in the new language of modern thought. It was one of the most celebrated disciples of Laotze, the great Chinese philosopher, who was contemporary with Confucius more than two thousand years ago—for he lived six centuries before the Christian era—who said, "A vivid light shone on the highest antiquity, of which only a few rays have reached us. It appears to us that the ancients were in darkness because we see them only through the thick clouds from which we ourselves have just issued. Man is an infant born at midnight, who, when he sees the sun rise, thinks that yesterday never existed." (Abbé Huc's *Chinese Empire*, vol. ii. p. 184.)

In like manner, young inquirers in all places are constantly discovering what has been said before, and is as old as the hills, imagining that to be a new discovery which they have discovered for the first time for themselves. A really new reflection is probably as rare and doubtful an event as a new virtue, or a new vice, or a new disease.

statement true, is it not a great misuse of words to use the same term to denote notions so widely different as those which a cultivated European and a low savage entertain of God, and to assume implicitly that they are notions of the same thing? Let a clear and exact definition be made of that which the word is thought to signify in each case, and then let the definition of the European's God be substituted mentally for the word on each occasion when the god of the savage is spoken of, and the definition of the savage's god substituted mentally on each occasion when the God of the civilized person is spoken of,—it will be instantly and plainly evident that little or nothing is true of the God of the one which is true of the God of the other. So far from identity, there is barely a similarity of objects; the mental substitution is not a substitution of similars, which is the basis of true reasoning, but a substitution of dissimilars, which is necessarily a basis of false reasoning. It is impossible to say how great a number of disputes arising out of the entanglements of words would collapse instantly were the disputants to have clear definitions of their terms, and to substitute mentally the definitions for the terms in their reasonings.

A second fruitful cause of error in the use of words is the assumption, implicit or explicit, that the

word must mean a thing. There have been few, if any, more pregnant causes of errors in philosophy than the tendency to make words things, by projecting named abstractions of the mind into nature as entities, and thereafter treating them as if they were active agents there. We misapprehend nature, and then make of our misapprehensions principles or entities in it. Thus have sprung up and flourished many metaphysical entities which have done duty as explanations of events when they were really not explanations at all, no more than restatements of the facts in more abstract forms: a principle of phlogiston to explain the phenomena of combustion; a soporific principle to account for the narcotic virtues of opium; a vital principle to preside over the phenomena of life; a spiritual principle to uphold the high dignity of mental phenomena. At one time, before the discovery of the circulation of the blood had laid the basis of a true physiology, almost as many special animal principles or spirits were invoked as there were special functions of the body —a concoctive spirit to do the first work of digestion, a chylopoietic spirit to carry the work further, and other spirits to perform other functions; so that Harvey had to protest earnestly in his day against the "common subterfuge of ignorance" by which spirits were called into play whenever the knowledge

of true causes failed. His example was no less signal a warning than his protest, for he fell unawares himself into the very error which he condemned, when he left the solid ground of the circulation of the blood, where he had facts to go upon and was thoroughly at home with them, to treat of the mysteries of generation, where he had no solid foundation of knowledge on which to base his theories.

This tendency of mind, from which unnumbered errors and entanglements and hindrances of thought have sprung, is of the same nature as that which showed itself in grosser display in the creation of gods and goddesses, demons and other such spiritual monsters, which, as Erasmus justly says, often "had more of the hangman than of God in them." Is metaphysics anything more than supernaturalism writ fine? In the one case man puts his mental imaginations in nature as supernatural deities and demons; in the other case he puts his mental abstractions there as metaphysical entities or principles. To be above or beyond physics is little different from being above or beyond nature, and any philosophy, be it a philosophy of mind or matter, which is metaphysical, seems likely to be hard put to it to explain its essential difference from supernaturalism.

It is one of the merits of Kant to have clearly pointed out that all notions and beliefs respecting the order of nature, although not innate but derived from experience, are conditioned necessarily by the innate *forms* of human thought. These forms experience does not furnish; they are supplied in the constitution of mind, as the antecedent conditions of its experience, not otherwise than as the forms of bodily movements are conditioned by the constitution and dispositions of its muscles. It was very useful work at the time, and the need of it then greater than it is easy to conceive now; but some of those who persuade themselves they are his modern disciples are going fast on the way to treat forms of thought as if they had existence and meaning in themselves apart from their contents, and as if they were in no sense relative like thoughts, but had independent being and absolute value. A philosophy occupying itself with these forms, apart from their contents and relations, far from being thought a philosophy of empty words and phrases, aspires to be acclaimed as the culmination of true philosophy. Is it not much as if a metaphysically minded botanist were to occupy himself with abstract and absolute forms of trees, and plants, and herbs, and flowers, and their parts, scorning any proposal to unite eternal form with changing substance as a material degradation of true botanical philosophy?

Let the subjective element or form of thought common to the whole human race be the absolute, seeing that we cannot conceive its being changed while men are constituted as they are and think as they do, still, if the order of evolution of nature goes on for countless years to come, making as many modifications and new growths of structure in the future as it has done in the countless years of the past, it is not inconceivable that the forms of time and space and causality may undergo change and be proved to be as essentially relative as any other human experience, whether innate or acquired. Meanwhile what part does space take, as a necessary *form* of thought—in the minds of those who are so happy as to be able to form a conception of it—in relation to thoughts of time or of logical relations? and what part time, as a necessary form of thought, in thoughts of relations of coexistent space? It is impossible that any height or depth or form of human knowledge can in the end be more than relative; at its best, knowledge is incomplete ignorance, belief incomplete certainty.

Because man can form a general notion by reflection on particulars, which he then calls a general principle, he is prone to make of this so-called principle a real agency with authority higher than experience. In the first instance always probably, and often afterwards, the process of inference is really

from the particular to the particular. The child seems to practise it habitually while it is making the beginnings of learning, and as often as not makes wrong inference, because it does not discriminate the unlike, but puts an unlike thing for a like thing—the fundamental error of reasoning—and so concludes wrongly of it. As it grows in experience, it gathers like things together into classes (*interlego*, whence *intelligo*), which are denoted by general terms or names; and, at a still higher stage of observation and reasoning, the like relations and attributes of things are collected (*cogo*, whence *cogito*) into general classes, and denominated by more abstract terms. Intelligence is thus virtually, as its derivation implies, a correct classification. For as these funds of classified or, so to speak, capitalized experience, subsumed under general names, are stored in the mind, they are available always to be drawn on for use in reasoning; then the inference can be made inductively from the particular to the general, that is, from the individual to the kind or class, or deductively from the general to the particular, that is, from the kind or class to the individual.* But that is to say no more really than

* Deduction and induction not being distinct and separable processes of reasoning, but the complementary expressions of one complete process, they represent, as it were, the two aspects, the ingoing or sensory and the outgoing or motory, of the fundamental reflex process.

that the inference is to or from particulars of the same kind or like particulars—in other words, to or from particulars that have been attested as like by a multitude of experiences, and so labelled. Such is the real basis of the authority of the general statement or principle, and all the authority which it can prove itself to have. To refer the particular experience to reason, in other words, to pass by inference from the particular to the general, is to refer to the classified experience of the race, warranted good by general consent; reason does not add any higher principle of authority to the process, it is merely the conscious expression of it; and if there be any question of the meaning of the general principle, this must be sought in the concrete, not the meaning of the concrete in it.

The common way of thinking and speaking of a law of nature exemplifies a fallacy of the same kind. The law is pictured as a sort of objective power which rules despotically in its province of nature, and constrains things to obey it, whereas it is no more, rightly viewed, than the general statement of experience that things go in a certain definite course. The executive force is not in the law, but in the nature of the thing in its relation to other things. The law is simply the generalization of observation, no more than the general statement or subjective formula of a

certain order of events, and may be right or wrong, complete or incomplete. If the relations of things are definitely thus and thus, and not otherwise, and a man acts wilfully or ignorantly in regard to them as if they were not so, he comes to harm as naturally and inevitably as he comes to harm when he runs against a wall instead of climbing over it; but in that case it is not the law which avenges its infraction, it is the lawbreaker who hurts himself by a stupid or reckless ignoring of things and their properties. The erroneous notion of law as itself a cogent agency in nature has been derived from the notion of rule or law laid down by human enactment and enforced by due executive authority; and from law understood in this sense the transition was natural and easy to a lawgiver in the universe, working after human methods and made in the magnified image of man.

A conclusion of the same kind is the familiar conclusion from intelligence and reason in man to supernatural intelligence and reason; as though intelligence and reason were or could be anything more than a relative being's classified experience of a very limited range of natural things and their relations, or were terms of real meaning, other than literal non-sense, when used in relation to an absolute Being in whom all things are comprehended. It is

surely inconceivable how any predication concerning the supernatural by the natural can be more than a meaningless proposition. Nay, when we reflect upon it, what but a prodigious impiety and blasphemy is it to speak at all of the reason of God, whose knowledge must plainly be intuitive, not discursive! He, as all-seeing and infinite, proceeds not in lame human fashion, by steps and inferences of reason, but sees the remote in the present, the end in the beginning, the universal in the instant.

Much error of thought has arisen from the strong propensity to believe that opposite names must mean opposite things in nature: it has often been a long and serious hindrance to the full and free investigation of the things and to the discovery that they were not actual contraries; and where there has been some contrariety in the things, the distinct opposition of the names has worked to accentuate and exaggerate the differences, and to preclude observation of the points of similarity. Divisions of knowledge distinguished by their proper names have over and over again been assumed to denote distinct divisions in nature, discontinuities being thus made where continuity prevails everywhere. Had men set themselves resolutely to search exhaustively for the phenomena of death in life and of life in death, it is not probable that they would ever have set life

and death over against one another in such a clean antagonism as they have done. In like manner, if they had looked for such purposive operations in organized matter as, when conscious, they call mind, and for such operations in mind as, when unconsious, they refer to organic matter, they might not have made the complete and mischievous separation of mind and body which they have made. Any one who should go carefully to work in a province of nature where a distinct line of separation was made, in order to find out that it was not really the complete division which it seemed to be, and why it was not, could hardly fail to bring new facts to light and old facts into new light, and perhaps to make important discoveries.*

Many more illustrations of the power of words over things, or rather over the thoughts and feelings about things, might be adduced, were it necessary, since the history of thought in every department of nature teems with them. At one time, in medicine,

* The history of medicine, past and present, abounds in exemplifications. Take, as one instance, what is called inflammation, with its multitudinous varieties of itis, such as iritis, neuritis, corneitis, etc.; having included certain phenomena in the definition of inflammation as parts of its nature, the custom has been, and still is, to ignore, on the one hand, those instances in which most or all of the phenomena were present without recognized inflammation, and, on the other hand, those instances in which the effects of inflammation occurred without many or any of the phenomena.

any fancied sign of resemblance in the drug or in its name to something in the disease or in the disease's name, was thought to be nature's seal of its efficacy in that disease, and in country districts nettle-tea (*Urtica*, nettle) is still the popular remedy for nettle-rash (*Urticaria*).* The so-called principle that like cures like—*similia similibus curantur*—which is the foundation of the so-called homœopathic system of medicine, was not the induction of full and careful experience; not a conclusion reached through adequate observation of instances, but a theory engendered in the mind of its discoverer by the captivating suggestion of the words. Its faithful application in practice in all cases might issue in results not unlike those which followed the practice of the ingenious person who, obeying the scriptural injunction to pour oil into his enemy's wounds, poured oil of vitriol into them.

* The *doctrine of signatures* was founded on the absurd hypothesis "that every natural substance which possesses any medicinal virtue indicates by an obvious and well-marked external character the disease for which it is a remedy, or the object for which it should be employed." *Mandrake*, from its supposed resemblance to the human form, was esteemed as a remedy for sterility; *turmeric*, as a remedy for jaundice, because of its brilliant yellow colour; *euphrasia* (eye-bright), as an application for diseases of the eye, because it has a black spot in its corolla resembling the pupil; and the bloodstone, because of the occasional small specks of a blood-red colour on its green surface, is even at this day used in some parts of Scotland and England to stop a bleeding from the nose. (Paris's *Pharmacologia*, p. 33.)

Among all nations, in all places, and all times ill-meaning words have been dreaded as likely to bring misfortune. The ill omen boded by the names was an all-sufficient reason to the ancient Romans for changing the name of *Malcventum* into *Beneventum*, of *Epidamnum* into *Dyrrachium;* a contagion of evil was feared in them. It is a general, if not natural, impulse to shrink from speaking of a person's death in his presence, or in the presence of his friends, or even in any one else's presence; rather than use the actual word, people go about to use some kind of circumlocution to indicate what they will not say directly; and in different nations there have been all sorts of euphemisms used for this purpose, just as if the word "death," the moment it left the speaker's lips, were an operative power to fulfil itself.* Not many persons can divest themselves completely of the superstitious feeling that there is something more than a mere explosion of vain words, some power more than natural, some mysterious executive agency, in a parent's curse of a disobedient child, though the child hear it not, or in the victim's dying appeal to God's vengeance on his murderer.

* Although a general, it is not a universal, impulse; for the Chinese meet death with the greatest coolness; and nothing is more gratifying to the dying man than to see that a handsome coffin has been prepared for him. (See Abbé Huc's *Chinese Empire.*)

So much, then, in exemplification of the sort of errors of belief that have flowed from the natural defects of human observation and reasoning. It is abundantly evident that many of the superstitious beliefs and practices which have come and gone through the measureless past of human doings have had their source and sustenance in these defects. Though inevitable once as imperfect developments of thought, such superstitions and errors have outlived their *raison d'être*, and now stand over in civilized countries as survivals of a lower level of intelligence. Being degradations of thought, in the sense of belonging to lower grades of thought, they are naturally displayed most largely by those who are so engrossed with the supply of their daily wants that they have not the leisure or inclination to train and cultivate their minds in correct habits of thought, and in relation to those subject-matters of thought that lie furthest from the reach of human apprehension.*

* "Superstition" means literally "something which stands over." A custom, or practice, or belief, which survives when the life and meaning have gone out of it, and when it is, perhaps, mischievous, as from the inherent conservatism of human nature often happens, is literally a superstition. It has outlived the reason of its being, and is what Mr. Tylor aptly calls "a survival." No doubt insufficient beliefs were sufficient enough for their purposes at the time; therefore, although errors now, they were practically truths then. The superstition is to treat them as truths now when, conflicting with experience or contradicted by it, they subsist only by virtue of the conservative force of tradition, custom, and the like, and require, therefore, super-

If there be a class of men who deliberately cut themselves off and keep themselves aloof from the methods and aims of a positive study of nature, by which these past errors have been uprooted and the intellectual progress of modern times has been gradually accomplished, pursuing an artificial training according to pre-scientific methods in subjects that lie outside the aims and means of true knowledge, and thus moulding for themselves a special mental mechanism, they will naturally fall into the same kinds of errors and embody the same kinds of superstitions as those of whom they are the representative survivals.

Any one who wishes may follow the entire process of defective seeing and thinking by watching the growth and development of a child's mind, which repeats, in abstract and brief chronicle, the main errors of the development of human thought through the ages; even as its embryonic development repeats in a series of rapid sketches the successive stages of the slow process of organic development on earth from the simple and general to the most complex and special form of animal life.

natural authority in order to maintain any credit. Hence another and ill meaning of the word has come to be something which stands over as beyond explanation by natural causes, and must be referred to supernatural causes, and which is cherished as sacred when it is useless, or burdensome, or even pernicious and pestilent.

CHAPTER III.

2. THE ACTIVITY OF IMAGINATION.

THE second great source of error attaching to the operations of the sound mind is the exceeding activity of imagination, which is a prolific faculty or function always eager and pleased to exercise itself. The quick way in which it hastens to fill the voids of knowledge with fictions and theories affords a remarkable contrast to the slow, toilsome, and comparatively unwelcome work of observation and reasoning. Why it is that there is so much more pleasure and spontaneity in the exercise of imagination making fictions than in the exercise of reason welding truth, we know not, unless it be that it is a particular instance of the pleasure and spontaneity which belong to the function of generation universally throughout nature. For the essential character of the function of imagination is generation or creation, whether as poetry, painting, invention, or any other form of art (*ποίησις*, that is, of any sort),

and pleasure its natural accompaniment, therefore; while the operations of reason may be compared to the slow, tedious, and gradual processes of education and training.

However rigidly the rules of right seeing and thinking are laid down, and their strict observance enjoined, it seems certain from past experience that they will continue to be violated habitually; the mind, however well disciplined in self-restraint, will not be, as it has not been, content to stay in the simple confession and quiet repose of ignorance concerning all that lies beyond its reach of knowledge. An insatiable curiosity to know will urge it, as heretofore, to chafe impatiently at the check and to endeavour to surmount it; and with good reason, since without speculative curiosity there would be no inquiry, and without inquiry no increase of knowledge. In time to come, then, so long at any rate as the *nisus* of evolution lasts in nature and works through man, we may continue to expect, as in times past it has been, fictions instead of facts, theories anticipating observation, conjectures taking the credit of certitude.

The forms of imagination's creation naturally correspond with the levels of thought at the time and place, and follow the fashions of its conceptions. As once it peopled the universe with deities and demons

more or less in the image of man, and afterwards with the metaphysical entities into which it transformed mental abstractions, so now it exercises its function in the creation of a multitude of theories that forerun and often forestall observation in the different branches of scientific inquiry. And inasmuch as imagination, however much it may overrun or fantastically mould thought, cannot transcend its forms, it reproduces inevitably in its operations the usual modes of error which have been traced in observation and reasoning; the theories which it creates being vitiated by sequences made into consequences, by causation made out of coincidence, by parts taken as the whole, and unessentials as essentials, and by like general fallacies, and being inspired in the particular by the several tempers and moods of mind. These testify again, not only to the modes of thought of the age and people, but also to the individual modes of error of thought—to the varieties of individual passion, interest, prejudice, temper, and other distorting feelings. Let imagination be carefully watched in its least restrained, its freest and most riotous play, as, for instance, in dreaming and in madness, nowhere will plainer proof be found of its inspiration by the moods and habits of thought of the individual.*

* Only let it be remembered that moods of which he is only dimly or indirectly conscious when awake, or perhaps not conscious at all,

When men divine, according to the forms of their experience, from what they observe and know, that which, either from the natural limitations of the senses or from other causes, they cannot observe and know, they may be right or they may be wrong; since it is by no means certain that those things which lie within observation are the measures of those things which lie beyond observation. In the first place, our knowledge of nature, rapidly as it has increased and increases in so many directions, is exceedingly little compared with the vast amount of our ignorance of it; and it may well be, nay, certainly is, that there are many discoveries to be made, not yet dreamt of in science, which will modify greatly the measures and moulds of our experience. We are not sure that what we do know of nature as it is is like that which we do not know; nor are we likely ever to have that certitude, since the number of combinations and changes possible in it is practically infinite, and they are not exhaustible in any one province of science. Supposing knowledge were to go on growing rapidly at its present rate of progress, without suffering a check at any time, for as many years as the world

then come into prominent display, and act with unrestrained freedom in feeling and imagination. There are, so to speak, denudations of the constituent layers of mind, of more or less partial extent and of varying depth, whence strange uprisings into consciousness of exposed strata.

is likely to last, it would not then reach or even approximate to the fulness and variety of nature.* In the second place, the changes of the world from its primeval inorganic state to its present state of complex organic development, have been changes from the like to the unlike; and it is as impossible for any one to foretell now what the state of things on earth will be some hundred thousand years to come, as it would have been impossible for a primeval savage of the premoral ages to have foretold how men would dwell together, or, failing the fact, anticipate dwelling together in peace and unity in the moral ages. We cannot say that our knowledge of things as they are must be like that which those who come after us will have of things as they are to be after so many years of becoming; we are not even sure that the becoming will be a bettering.

If imagination is certainly not competent to fill the voids of present knowledge of nature, and still less competent to construct the knowledge of its becomings in time to come, it is obviously not com-

* Chemists have examined some thousands of inorganic and organic substances, but have made little impression on the multitude which may exist. As many games of whist as have been played since whist was invented, it is almost certain that one game was never exactly like another, except by prearrangement; and it has been calculated that, if the whole population of the world were to deal cards day and night for a hundred million of years, they would not in that time have exhausted one hundred-thousandth part of the possible deals. (Jevons, *Principles of Science.*)

petent to construct at all in the supernatural regions of the above-all-becoming, where even the fundamental forms of thought have no sway or place. How apply to beings and events of eternity and infinity that which works necessarily and entirely under conditions of time and space? How think, as some profess to do, under forms of eternity, *sub specie eterni?* To pretend to that is nothing less than to make eternity not eternal, to think the finite and to call it infinite; to succeed in it would be to enter into an impersonal eternity while yet a person. The peopling of supernatural regions with supernatural beings, and the construction of histories of their doings, are now acknowledged on all hands to have been the busy work of imagination weaving idle fictions; the tales of the gods of Olympus and their loves and quarrels, which had real hold at one time on the most sacred feelings and thoughts of the most richly endowed people of antiquity, kindle no feeling of reality in any mind. But it is not apparently perceived by many, and not sufficiently considered by those who do perceive it, that the notion of eternal individual life is, from a logical standpoint, just as ungrounded an exercise of imagination as any Olympian god, as much a superstition as the favour of Apollo to Hector, or Pallas's protection of Achilles. A life that is eternal is not life in the real sense of the word, for life, as we

have experience of it, is not a conception at all without the contrasting and defining conception of death—without its antirelate, so to speak; wherefore to call it eternal, is to couple essential inconsistents by terms which then are meaningless in human thought: it is to apply, by means of an adjective, to something, as attribute, a quality which it is an essential character of its own nature that it has not. What he actually does who plays this piece of deception on himself is to get rid, by abstraction, of as many attributes of the finite as he can, and, when he has done that, to imagine he imagines it divested of all limitations, which it is impossible he ever can. By the fundamental laws of its being and function the imagination is precluded from any fruitful work in supernatural regions; and by the same laws it is adapted to work in natural regions of which we have not yet gained natural knowledge—regions, that is, that are beyond knowledge not beyond nature, metagnostic not metaphysical.

The multitudinous errors of imagination are rightly to be viewed as necessary offsets of its beneficial uses. Its forward-reaching function has everywhere been the incentive and initiative of progress. What but imagination has enticed and stirred men to enter upon the unknown, the vague, vast and mysterious, by presenting to them images of distinct paths

and rich territories there; whereupon they, venturing in search of these paths and domains, though they have found themselves beguiled and deceived, have made new paths in their ventures, laid out definite districts, and appropriated the country for use and profit. It is imagination which attracts the lover to his mistress, by gilding her modest charms with the glow of the light that never shone on sea or land, and beguiles him into marriage, as into the sure promise of an earthly paradise; and he, notwithstanding that he is soon mightily disenchanted by experience, finds, in compensation, sober domestic joys and does the procreant and prosaic work of the world. It seduces the politician by alluring thoughts of fame and glory and of benefits to his country, and inspires him to go through his arduous and often ignoble labours: what matters it that he discovers in no long time, if he is not a simple innocent, that fame is sounding vanity and glory an idle phantasm, since he has meanwhile done zealous work which he would never have done had he been disillusioned at the outset? It furnishes a plentiful supply of the preliminary hypotheses necessary in all branches of scientific research—those guesses at truth which great discoverers, like Kepler and Faraday, make in abundance in order to begin to look definitely for it, the erroneous ones, thrown aside as unfit after trial, being many times more

numerous than those which verification proves to be well founded. It inspires the idealizations of the poet, by means of which he throws glamours of joy and beauty over the hard and dreary realities, and yields a glowing warmth to the aspirations of the heart which is denied to the cold light of reason. Lastly, attaining its most ambitious flights, it creates and peoples those unseen worlds, to the joys of which so many nations in different times and places have looked forward for recompense and rest after the sufferings and labours of this life.

Inasmuch as imagination acts at bottom in the same way when it creates the ideal in art, in poetry, and in life (for every to-morrow is mostly foreseen in brighter hues than to-day) as it does when, in more childlike exercise, it acts as the maker of myths,—what of the results? Are its ideals, when it bestows human feelings on natural objects and scenes, raising and transfiguring them by its golden alchemy, any better founded in fact, any less illusions, than the myths and superstitions which were the outcome of its fashioning in human shape, and endowing with human feelings, the unknown forces of nature? Is the living poetry of to-day essentially different from the dead myths of yesterday? Let the answer be as it may, it is evident that imagination supplies always the seductive attraction and the tentative initiative

in the process of progressive interaction between the individual and nature; the pleasure which accompanies its exercise being proof of the importance attached to its function as a means and incentive of progress. Although its births perish timelessly by the thousands, most of them "no sooner blown than blasted," and only a small remnant ever coming to maturity, that is but effect and testimony of the exuberance of the productive energy of nature, of which it is the latest and highest outcome.

In this capacity it has naturally the defects of its virtues. Many times we see with what fervent and exclusive zeal persons of a narrow but intense imagination adopt and defend a particular theory which appeals to their feelings, how eagerly they discover and embrace evidence in support of it, how insensible they are to all facts and arguments which run counter to it, how enthusiastically or even fanatically they exert themselves to propagate it. In vain the most competent rebutting testimony of persons qualified by character and experience to give it, and the strongest conflicting evidence of facts, are presented to them; a rejection of the theory which they passionately hold seems proof of intellectual blindness, if not of actual moral obliquity. The impassioned belief is a matter of temperament, not in the least a matter of evidence with them; for it may be entertained in

respect of an obscure and difficult subject which they have not had the means and training necessary to investigate, and are not in the least qualified to pronounce an opinion on. For example, the enthusiastic layman who advocates the homœopathic treatment of disease would not abate the ardour of his conviction in the least if it were pointed out to him that he knows nothing of the principles of physiology, to know which properly a man must give nearly the study of a lifetime, and is entirely ignorant of the knowledge of the natures of drugs and of their modes of action on the body, which has been slowly accumulated by the special labours of those who have devoted themselves to the requisite researches; nor is he moved to even a moment's doubt by the general dissent of all those who have made these things their special lifelong studies. It is the same with many of the opponents of vaccination. Whether vaccination be the valuable discovery which its adoption among so many nations and for several generations would seem to indicate, may be put aside for the purpose of the present illustration; for it is certain that some of those who are the most bitter and passionate enemies of the practice have not really mastered the facts and arguments which induced governments, after due inquiry, to adopt and enforce it, and induces them, after due experience, to continue to enforce it. Never-

theless, there is not an advocate of its use, though he have the best qualifications to give a trustworthy opinion, whose conviction of its value is so intense and sure as the conviction of its worthlessness, or of its actual harm, which is entertained by the fanatical opponent who is without the requisite qualifications, and therefore without the right, to form an opinion. The uninformed opinion of the incompetent is held more confidently, and expressed more vehemently, than the informed opinion of the competent; furthermore, the greater intensity of belief is commonly deemed by its possessor to be the exponent of higher moral quality, the surplusage of assurance from insufficient evidence put down to moral credit.*

* Like-minded persons are some of the shrill philanthropists who have become a marked feature of the age in England. Eager to believe horrors which they may proclaim, and denounce, and compassionate, and clamorously demand the immediate abolition of, they eagerly embrace sensational stories of them, and are indignant at the moral insensibility or iniquity of those who, preserving their sobriety of judgment, adduce evidence of the real facts, when that evidence suits not with the intensity of their delirious imaginations. They furnish an instructive example of reflex action carried to a delirious strain; for they eagerly stimulate sensibility by a positive relish for the obscene and horrible details of vice and misery which they diligently expose and magnify in order to excite themselves to the rapture of a loud-enough expression of shrill horror and pity. They are really possessed with an intense egoism, of which their passion of pity is a sort of convulsive outcome, and they mistake their keen self-love for the noblest altruism. Two facts, therefore, are commonly notable with regard to them in their own lives: first, their intense individual selfishness; second, their inability to see

There are certain persons who, having a peculiar quality of temperament which they owe frequently to a distinct neurotic strain—sometimes a strain of madness—in their families, are prone naturally to deviate in thought and feeling from the accustomed tracks. They start away from right tracks, simply because all the world follows them, if there are no wrong tracks for them to start away from. They have impulses of originality which give them noticeable individualities of character, inspiring the variations or starts which often lead nowhere, it is true, but by rare and happy chance lead now and then to new and stable developments of thought. The multitudes run in grooves of habit, and cannot think, feel, or do anything outside them; for them that which has been is that which shall be, and they shrink back with alarm or horror from any questioning of old doctrine or any proposal of new doctrine; outside their grooves they are almost as stupid and witless and devoid of resource as bees that are taken off their usual lines of function. Wisely, then, do they cling to their anchorage in the past who are so witless

and speak the truth. If they marry and breed, their children are apt to die in convulsions in early life, or to be idiots, or, later in life, to become insane or otherwise antisocial and abortive. It were well for the world, on the whole, were such persons content to propagate themselves in their life-work, without wishing to propagate themselves in progeny.

loosed from it. The truth which their forefathers received is that which they are content to receive and hold and to hand down to their posterity. History reveals in lights only too lurid the horrible cruelties with which tribes and nations and sects have encountered and suppressed the revolutionary impulses which threatened to overthrow the old customs, rites, ceremonies, and beliefs. It is a saving instinct in communities which prompts them thus to hold stubbornly to what they have believed and thought and done in the past, since they prevent thereby the dangerous disturbance of equilibrium or actual disruption of unity which might ensue were new movements embraced precipitately and too eagerly fostered. In it there lies the implicit recognition of their obligation to the past, in which they are rooted, from which they proceed and can in no case sever themselves; and it is a salutary means of inspiring and informing the forward-reaching developmental impulses, apt to be elated and rash, with the genius and sobriety of the past. Thereby are secured continuity and stability of development in due and orderly progress, revolution taking the wholesome course of evolution.

Obviously it is well also that there are persons whose impulses instigate them to question received opinions and established customs, and who experience so intense a pleasure in the gratification of their

natural impulses that they had rather undergo martyrdom than keep silence. For it is certain that an opinion may not be well-grounded, though it be consecrated by tradition and have the general assent both of the uninstructed many and of the instructed few; it may be no better really than a superstition, notwithstanding that it is invested with an almost sacred sanction, which it is thought impious and profane to dispute. It is when a superstition of the kind is deeply rooted in the social constitution and habits of the people, when, being a part of their national mode of thought and feeling which, like language, differentiates them from other peoples, it is the seal and symbol of national unity (a *religio*), that the impulse to question it is most unlikely to spring up from within, most likely to be suppressed if it does so spring up, least likely to escape death from inanition when it is not suppressed by violence. Then all the fiery zeal and energy of a fanatical enthusiasm, almost insane in its recklessness of opposition and of consequence, are required in order to revolt against its authority and to withstand its tyranny. If a neighbouring people thinks differently, and if conquest or commerce bring the two peoples into a close intercourse, naturally the process of modification is easier; the old opinion has not then the same consistent external support in a uniform social atmo-

sphere, while the internal tendency to variation of thought and feeling is increased by intermixture.

It is impossible for a generation which has grown out of a worn-out belief to realize the mental state of its forefathers who were passive under its unquestioned sway, and incapable of so much as conceiving a suspicion of its eternal validity; and the impossibility sufficiently explains the difficulty which it has in receiving with patience the suggestion that its own most cherished beliefs may not be eternal verities. It is no more patient than its forefathers were of revolt against beliefs that lie as close to its heart as theirs lay close to their hearts. Consider, for example, the superstitious reverence which so many persons at the present day attach to what are called "the rights of property," as though these were something sacred, fixed in the eternal nature of things, the foundation of all society, and an attack upon them were the very climax of wickedness or of madness. Without doubt the institution of rights of property has been of excellent use, indeed, an indisputably necessary condition of the development of society up to its present level; but it was a human institution in the beginning, and it is not a truth beyond question that it must be the necessary condition of the highest society to the end. It was society which conferred the

authority and sanction for such rights in the first instance; it is by virtue only of its protective regulations that any one enjoys them in security now; and it may properly at any time, if it see fit to do so, in order to develop a higher society, resume its rights by taking away or modifying the individual's privileges. Nevertheless, this conception of the individual's provisional rights of property is one which, though it seems of axiomatic plainness, the great majority of persons cannot so much as entertain or conceive to be honestly entertainable; it strikes them as a monstrous attack upon the sacred principles of the social fabric, an outrage on the original instincts of the human heart, repugnant to a sane and moral nature; and they fall into a fury of reprobation, or stand in paralyzed amazement at the audacity, of any one who sets forth the primal truth of the matter, not as if he were a person in error propounding wrong doctrine, but as if he were a malignant conspirator against the fundamental principle of human well-being.* Meanwhile the principle attacked is really a superstition in so far as it is the survival, invested with a sacred sanction, of a principle which, suiting

* He provokes very much the same kind of feeling as the early Christian did in the time of Nero, when the very name was a crime, and he was called *hostis patriæ, humani generis inimicus, hostis deorum atque hominum.*

a former and simpler state of things, may not suit a present or future and more complex state of things.

We see, then, the good uses of the narrow and intense mental temperament which, seizing on, or rather seized of, a particular doctrine, holds it enthusiastically against all the world, and fights impetuously for it until it is victorious, if such be its fortune. Of such stuff are the vehement reformers of abuses and the makers of revolutions made; they concentrate into one sharp point or edge the sensibilities and evolutional energies of a passionate nature, and are most effective working instruments for a special purpose. Let it be a wrong doctrine which is thus passionately championed, still the fight for it is not all evil nor all in vain; there is compensating good in the inquiry which is provoked, whereby its defects and errors are demonstrated and the foundations of the old doctrine laid bare, examined, and made more secure. The philosopher, alive to the possible value of a happy variation in organic development, may well treat it, as the Turks used to treat the words of idiots, with a certain tender reverence, as possibly springing from a supernatural source and having a quasi-divine significance, or as the *vox populi* was treated when, by attributing to its casual utterances a divine or prophetic character,

it was declared to be the *vox Dei*.* Haply there may be in the new thought the quiver of a great inspiration of imagination, the tremulous impulse of a budding variation destined to develop into a new mental organ.

Anticipating positive knowledge in time to come, as heretofore, imagination will no doubt continue to fill the dark places thereof with hypotheses, most of them entirely illusive and worthless, some of temporary use as provisional guides to research, a few that stand the test of verification and take a permanent place in intellectual growth. If it be essentially the latest and highest outcome of the generative or productive energy or *nisus* of organic nature, as I have maintained it to be, partaking therefore in its teeming fertility, we may well compare the inexhaustible profusion of its products to the countless multitude of germ-cells or sperm-cells which the individuals of a species produce. One individual generates as many such cells in the course of its life, each one of them capable, in propitious circumstances, of becoming a complete individual, as would suffice perhaps sometimes,

* For that was the original meaning of the adage, not the manifest untruth which it is now often used to mean, that the opinion of the multitude is right. Another and opposite Latin adage, cited by Seneca, was *argumentum pessimi turba, i.e.* the concurrence of the crowd is a proof of the worst side. (See Cornwall Lewis, *On Authority in Matters of Opinion*, pp. 112, 119.)

were all of them thus to come to full maturity, to produce as numerous a population as that of the existing individuals of the species. Of these untold multitudes, however, all but a very small remnant perish timelessly. So is it with the products of imagination; they come into being as results of its ceaseless generative activity, but only here and there and now and then does one of them undergo fertilization, take suitable root, and grow into maturity.

At the risk of being thought fanciful, I may venture to carry the physical comparison a step further. What is the equivalent on the physical side—for such equivalent there must be—what the nervous substratum, of an act of imagination? We learn from the physiologists that the nervous substratum of thought is, directly or indirectly, a nervous tract in connection with an ingoing sensory and an outgoing motor channel—what they call a reflex arc in the cerebral plane. How can imagination have any place in such a process, which, though it may increase in strength, can never go outside its own track, never transcend experience? Perhaps it is, when imagination works, that there is a production of new nerve-junctions or nerve-tracks from the old stocks or tracks of thought, or, if not an actual production, the bringing into use, for the formation of junctions, of nerve-cells lying around in all states of incom-

plete development. These new elements will testify necessarily of the special qualities of their immediate parents, being rich in rare qualities and full of vigour and promise when these are well informed by good experience and sound training, but feeble and poor and futile when the basis of sound experience and thought is wanting; and when they form apt organic unions or junctions between proper nerve-tracks, they lay the physical basis of fresh combinations of ideas, bright flashes of new conceptions, prophetic anticipations of subsequent experience. It is not anyhow, as some thoughtlessly conclude, imagination which starts the organic process, it is the organic process which is the condition of imagination. That currents pass along neighbouring tracks and run into adjacent nerve-terminals (where the nerve loses its isolating sheath and ends indistinguishably in the tissue) is certain; it is not improbable, therefore, that when, accumulating there, they attain by intensification of qualities or nearness of approach a certain attraction, they break through the impeding matter and rush together, making an organized path by coercing the elemental units into definite positions, temporary or permanent.

Two thoughts, or the qualities of two thoughts,

* In order that a junction of tracks may take place, it would seem certainly necessary that a nerve-cell intervene to effect it.

bound together organically so as to constitute a new conception, — that is the simple and fundamental type of imagination in invention, in art, in science, in poetry, everywhere. The simplest exercise of it is that which takes place when there is a simple union of things without real analogies in their natures, as when the wings of a bird are joined incongruously to the body of a horse, so making a centaur; then at a higher level comes fancy, yoking things or qualities together temporarily by superficial traits of resemblance, without regard to fundamental quality and essential likeness—'tis the playful and coruscating display of momentary attractions, such as is seen in brilliant disorderly action in the whimsical associations of ideas and words in commencing mania; last, at the highest level, we have to do with truly informed imagination, which, inspired by the deepest affinities of nature, organically unites the essential qualities of things, creating a product which is a living addition to the mental organization—something better than experience, because more perfect than individual experience, and in harmony with all possible experience of its kind.*

* The difference between the aërial flights of fancy at its highest strain and the solid work of the highest imagination is best seen, perhaps, by comparing Shelley's much and justly admired *Ode to the Skylark* with some passage of Shakespeare's dramas, in which his rich and strong imagination works with the perfect ease, and depth,

The range of imagination will be much restricted in the future, if it scrupulously forego all flight into supernatural domains; but it may be expected, in compensation, to gain more in power and usefulness to mankind by working soberly to definite ends within the domain of sense and thought, than it will lose by relinquishing its ambitious aspirations to work in the void. But will it consent to relinquish its dear delights? Will men ever be content to look upon all their past and present notions of the supernatural as pre-scientific products of imagination? However that may be in the end, we may be sure that for a long time to come there will be no lack of persons who will passionately refuse to part with their cherished belief in and imagined intercourse with the supernatural. Admitting that the numberless conflicting and contradicting varieties of belief respecting it in all places and in all times, from the beginning of man's career on earth, have nearly all turned out to

and power, and unconsciousness of a natural function at its best. How fanciful, in the comparison, seem Shelley's metaphors! how strained, if not overstrained, the analogies! how laboured the ingenuities of expression! how artificial and self-conscious the construction of the transitions of thought! No doubt there is abundance of strained fancy in Shakespeare's sonnets, which are so full of witty conceits and laboured ingenuities of expression that the sense of passion is lost—inevitably so, since wit and depth of passion are essentially incompatible. It is in his dramas that imagination is truly organic. Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, is perhaps the most perfect example in English literature of light and playful fancy.

be imperfect or false, and many times ridiculous, revolting, or degrading; admitting, too, that the notions of it entertained by civilized nations professing the common religion of Christianity have been much restricted in number and modified in character, especially since men devoted themselves successfully to the scientific study of natural laws; —they will nevertheless protest that the universally spread faith in the supernatural is convincing proof of positive human relations with it, and will believe in their own notions of it, or in the notions of it inculcated upon them by those whom they look up to with respect as their spiritual guides and directors.

To suppose otherwise would be to suppose that men will break abruptly with their past and suddenly become new creatures, putting off their old modes of forming opinions, and correcting all the errors and defects of reasoning which are habitual to them, and will adopt careful habits of scrupulous observation and cautious reasoning in every case in which the means and opportunities of observation exist; make searching examination of the qualifications of those who enjoy credit and reputation as authorities in matters that lie beyond the means and opportunities of ordinary observation, so as never to be imposed upon by false authority; and acquire such an intimate impregnation with the spirit and

the methods of modern scientific research, as it is impossible, the means of livelihood making the demands on most men which they do, to look for outside a very small minority of the race. All we can be sure of is that the post-scientific products of the imagination on supernatural lines will be less wonderful than its pre-scientific products have been; while we may fairly hope that its scientific products will become more and more wonderful.

Already we see that result in process of steady accomplishment. With the exception of a comparatively small number of persons, many of them endowed with that intense and narrow mental temperament which has been described previously, all the civilized world has ceased to believe in the visible appearance of spirits and ghosts, or to occupy itself with their concerns. Those who, as ministers and exponents of the mysteries of the Christian religion, formerly set forth particularly the events of the supernatural world, and confidently exacted literal belief in them, now speak of them for the most part in a style of vague and distant generality, if they do not treat them as metaphorical instruction used in condescension to human weakness; while some abandon such histories as altogether fabulous, and retreating to the one notion of an infinite and eternal supernatural Being who created all things in the beginning

and will bring them to a good end at the last. That they deem the one certain and essential belief in respect of the supernatural, other beliefs about it having been only the particular temporary forms which, owing to the shortcomings of human thought, were its necessary vestures in the successions of the ages. More and more discernible, too, becomes the tendency to divest the supernatural of personality; instead of a personal God, in whose image man was made originally, the inclination of many manifestly is to entertain a vague pantheistic notion, which differs rather in name than in fact from atheism; while others go so far as openly and unequivocally to reject the notion of any sort of personality of the absolute as not irreligious only, but revolting to reason.* It is plain, then, that, although the same name be used, it does not name the same thing in the mouths of those who, in using it, desire to mean something by it.

* The so-called "Liberal Protestants" of Germany, for example, seem to have pretty well abandoned theism for pantheism. Pfleiderer says, "Once the revolting idea of the personality of the Absolute has been abandoned;" and Lipsius of Jena calls the idea of a personal God "a contradiction in thought and an impossibility, philosophically inadmissible; but useful and indeed indispensable, man's nature being such that it cannot but personify what it worships." (Quoted in an article in the *Dublin Review* of October, 1884, p. 277.) Man's conception of unity is the outcome of his individuality; and individuality is, by the nature of it, limitation, separation from the whole, and therefore inevitable error from the standpoint of the whole.

When a personal Deity has gradually dislimned, evaporated into formless mist, and finally melted away into impersonal absolute, naturally the difficulty for mankind will be how to love *It* which is no longer *Him*, and to pray to It as to Him. It is possible to love nature in many of its concrete aspects, and even to fall into a certain ecstasy of rapture about it, while human nature as it has painfully evolved itself through the ages is the acknowledged and all-sufficient divinity of the disciples of Auguste Comte; but is it a natural procedure, or an actually achievable feat, to fall down in adoring love and reverence of the absolute, and to invoke its support in suffering, its counsel and help in time of need? Is it any less futile to persuade the heart to endeavour to feel itself inundated by such abstraction of a negation than it would be to urge the body to feed itself on the name or the aroma of savoury food? Had two Christian nations, professing the worship of the same God, truly the same real, complete, and adequate conception of His being and character as the one God which they persuade themselves they have, they could not, when about to go to war in order to do each other as much harm as possible, respectively pray to Him for His countenance and help in the work of slaughtering one another. The thing would seem a staring outrage of impious inconsistency. It is because each

prays to Him as in some sort its special God, its Jehovah, secretly identifying Him with its nature, needs, interests, and aspirations—and, so far un-Goding Him, so to speak—that it is able to ask Him for victory and to believe He will grant it. It is an instance essentially of the same kind, though of so much less extreme degree as hardly to seem of the same kind, as that of the Jew of old praying to his special God Jehovah, and the Philistine praying to his special god Baal, who, suffering defeat, was degraded into Beelzebub; and it serves well to show how necessary the notion of the personality of the supernatural is to the exercise of adoration, prayer, and worship—to a real, vital belief of its immediate concern in human affairs. When imagination withdraws entirely from the domain of the supernatural, and ceases to fashion the absolute into form, then prayer and worship must cease to have meaning for mankind; and when that comes to pass, if it ever come to pass, man may be a wiser, but not perhaps happier, being than he is now. To the race, as to the individual, wisdom cannot fail to bring disillusion, and increase of knowledge to be increase of sorrow.

But must probity, and virtue, and love of truth, and devotion, and self-sacrifice then inevitably die out of human life, as many persons seem gloomily pleased

to predict and fear? In the progress of human development, theocratic governments which, drawing their authority from supernatural sources, ruled men through their imaginations and fears, have been supplanted by governments based upon strictly civil conceptions of society, in which the necessary obligations and restraints of the social and political organization are derived from within itself; and all this without men being any less good citizens for the change. Is it not possible, indeed very probable, that the individual may go through a similar course of abandoning supernatural beliefs and sanctions, and of basing his principles of conduct more and more on social conceptions of a purely mundane kind, without, therefore, finding himself bereft of moral restraints, incapable of noble aspirations, destitute of human sympathies and virtues? Whence were drawn in the past the inspirations of the sublimest deeds of heroism and of self-sacrifice even to the laying down of life? Not from supernatural, but from natural sources. Not from any expectation of recompense in a future life, but as a simple act of pagan devotion to country or to kind, and oftentimes in the calm assurance that the sacrifice was the end of all, was the supreme sacrifice made by patriot or by hero; and we may be sure that in time to come, whatever views may be entertained of the supernatural, mankind will continue to find within

itself the natural sources of like fanatical inspirations.

It is indisputable that the one enthusiasm which burns in some breasts to the glow of the purest self-sacrifice at the present day, and alone promises to glow with more general fervour in the future, is the enthusiasm of humanity. It is humanity, or that portion of it from which he is sprung and in which he lives and moves and has his being, that is the inspiration and the guide and the providence of the individual: he feels, thinks, and acts as it moves, teaches, and directs him; and he rejoices, therefore, with a martyr's joy or a hero's pride in its applauding acclamation of sentiments and deeds which mark his devotion to it, notwithstanding that, from a standpoint outside it, such heroic deeds may not be of any more moment than the devoted zeal and self-sacrifice of a toiling ant in the busy service of its colony.

PART II.

UNSOUND MENTAL ACTION.

CHAPTER I.

MENTAL MALFORMITIES.

To run a distinct line of division between sound and unsound mental functions, however desirable in theory, is impossible in fact, since there are intermediate states, of many different degrees and sorts of development and disorder, which make a slope of imperceptible gradation from the sanest to the most insane thought and feeling. Mental pathologists have hardly taken sufficient account of this truth in their studies of the facts of morbid psychology, although they have not entirely overlooked it. Their business being to treat insanity of mind as disease or madness, they naturally do not occupy themselves much with the many instances in which it is not disease in the proper sense of the word, but irregular and defective mental development—malformation rather than actual derangement of intellect; not organic machinery in disorder, but organic machinery of bad order of construction and function.

It is certainly not from want of obtrusive proclamation of themselves that such instances are ignored; for while malformities of body simply incapacitate for the most part, and thus are fitted to stir compassion in others, malformities of mind are often occasions of active trouble and annoyance in the world, and thus provoke anger, aversion, or contempt. A person lame bodily knows his infirmity or, at least, does not think it a superiority; but a person of lame mind is so far from knowing his infirmity that he commonly deems himself superior to those who are well formed mentally. He can see himself reflected bodily in a glass, and so project his body mentally; he cannot by any ingenuity of introspective skill see his mind and project it into an object of external apprehension—cannot contemplate his own contemplating faculty, appreciate his own appreciating power. It would be a bad thing for the sane world were the intuition of individual self-consciousness in such case, or perhaps in any case, appraised by common judgment at the value at which it appraises itself.

There is a large class of peculiar persons, much differing from one another, who, agreeing in being unlike the majority of people of their age and country in their modes of thought, feeling, and action, have their several tendencies to deviation from the common nature described as eccentricity; instead of moving

in the common orbit of human thought and feeling, they manifest impulses to start from it—are eccentric. All insane persons are necessarily eccentric, but not all eccentric persons are insane. From a practical point of view, any one may be permitted to be as eccentric as he pleases, to go as much as he likes off the customary track of thinking, feeling, and doing, so long as his deviations or vagaries do not compromise social order; but there is a point of nonconformity at which the body social must interfere to protect itself, if it is to continue in well-being. Unlimited licence for the erratic individual to do as he likes would be incompatible with the holding together of the framework of society. From another point of view, eccentricities of thought and conduct have a special philosophic interest, inasmuch as from time to time they turn out to be valuable mental variations that initiate new and useful developments; rarely and exceptionally, no doubt, but still here and there, and now and then.

It is a matter of observation that remarkable special sensibilities and brilliant ability of thought or performance in particular departments of knowledge or art go along sometimes with signal eccentricity; an extraordinary development of one part of the mind being by no means incompatible with an irregular and unstable condition of other parts

of it, however the fact may conflict with metaphysical notions of mind as something that, having spiritual unity, has not extension or parts and cannot be divided. Moreover, a narrow intensity of temperament, whereby a notion of a particular kind is cherished with exclusive fervour, without regard to limitations and qualifications, and pushed with eager energy, without regard to occasions and hindrances, is sometimes a very useful practical force in the world, as I have already pointed out. To see an aim clearly and distinctly from a special standpoint, not to feel any distrust of it because it is a deviation from received opinion, nor to be in the least disheartened because it encounters ridicule and opposition on all hands, is an excellent thing when the notion has truth and life in it.

But it ought to be well weighed in regard to a person of such quality of thinking and acting that he is constitutionally incapable of weighing evidence, and commits habitually almost all the faults of bad observation and reasoning which it is possible to commit, and that the quality, in extreme degree, is the characteristic note of madness. If he is right, it is not his merit, since it is not by virtue of right observation and reasoning on his part; it is the effect of happy chance, the fortunate accident of his nature and circumstances. Owing to his

exclusive intensity of thought and feeling, such a one is especially liable to positive hallucinations and illusions; his fervour not only transfiguring real impressions into the shapes of his imagination, but projecting the images of his mind into objective forms. People easily see then that he is wrong who do not see that the habit of mind which thus, in extreme degree, begets hallucination does not fail, in less degree, to vitiate constantly his ordinary observation and thought. In no case is he to be thoroughly relied on to see and think the truth; although he be a useful instrument of nature for his purpose, it is a strictly limited and special purpose; for if he is placed where the circumstances are unsuited to the exercise of his predominant quality of character, where accurate observation, coherent thinking, and sound judgment are required, he is impotent and useless, if not troublesome and dangerous.

In the great majority of cases a person of that quality of temperament is not right but wrong, or, at any rate, more wrong than right. Leaving positively insane persons out of account, the people who run into the exaggerated development of one idea, or are affected with a passionate twisted-mindedness of one sort or another, or go off in eccentric impulses of feeling and conduct, occasion a great deal of annoyance and suffering to others, and commonly do more

harm than good in the world. It is others of a more wholesome and temperate wholeness of nature who have to suffer for the self-indulgence of their peculiar propensities, to thwart their follies, to counteract their extravagances, to smooth their difficulties, to rectify the disorders which they produce. They, meanwhile, absorbed in the narrow selfishness of their one-sided or twisted-minded natures, care not sincerely for any aim except so far as it serves to the gratification of the modes of their intense and special self-love. Nevertheless, by the very intensity of their self-confidence, by their constitutional insensibility to other interests, by their fanatical zeal and devoted singleness of purpose, they sometimes get credit for their pretensions, and attract followers who look up to them as semi-inspired.

The narrow intensity of faith has two natural effects which seldom fail to ensue from it—the one upon the individual himself, the other upon others. Intoxicated with the joy of his special enthusiasm, the individual is like a delirious or a drunken man who rejoices in everything which he does as its own sufficient justification, not needing either explanation or extenuation; accordingly he has no distrust of himself, no desire for sounder assurance, no compunction for his disregard of the interests and opinions of others, even those which have

most claim upon his consideration—no feeling but one of exultant self-satisfaction with his course of thought and conduct; secondly, the intensity of belief with which he holds to a novel and seemingly forlorn opinion, his extreme devotion to it, and its final success in spite of opposition and against all apparent reason, when it does succeed,—these are so surprising to others, who easily perceive his limitations, that the conception and its triumph seem more than natural, utterly inexplicable except as an inspiration from supernatural sources.

So it has been that religious impostors have sometimes arisen and flourished; not consciously insincere at the outset, perhaps, they have first deceived themselves, then have imposed upon others, and in the end, by the reflex effect upon themselves of the admiration and reverence of which they were the objects, have become more or less conscious impostors, affecting the sanctity and pretending to the inspiration which their disciples attribute to them. Wanting in intellectual wholeness and sincerity by reason of a natural flaw of mental structure, it is inevitable that they become morally insincere. They demand to be deluded, and they delude others; and to delude others is a sure way to become, by a stealthy process of self-collusion, self-deluded. It is signal unreason to challenge authority

and reverence for a person of this class, as is often tacitly or expressly done, because of his burning earnestness and sincerity to self, since he may be just as little capable of correct observation, and quite as incapable of self-observation, as if he were actually insane. His nature is not well tempered; it is intemperate, and on the way, therefore, to becoming distempered; and in any case it is a fact not to be lost sight of in this connection, that the sincerest person to self, and at the same time the insincerest to nature all round, is the lunatic.

The mind is not a single function or faculty, uncompounded and working always in the same simplicity and unity, but a confederation of functions or faculties which, though they have their divers subordinate operations and interests, are bound together into the organic unity of a whole. The body, which is a confederation of many different organs and structures, notably has its organic unity, whereby all its parts work together in fellowship to one end, the whole in each part and each part in the whole; and it is equally true, though it is not so manifest, that the brain has its unity, as the central co-ordinating organ in which all parts of the body have direct or indirect representation, and are brought into relations of action and reaction, through the senses and movements, with the external world, and that its unity is

a compound resultant of many parts and functions. This being so, it is impossible to develop one function or one class of functions to excess, without doing so at the expense of other functions and to its own detriment; the hypertrophy of it is the inevitable atrophy of them.

Antecedent to organic structural change, however, there is a parallel functional process of the same kind; the predominance of one line of function is the suspension or inhibition of other lines of function, before the disproportion becomes fixed in structural habit; and such disproportion of functions is literally an out-of-proportion or out-of-*ratio*, that is to say, a state verging towards what we call *irrational*. Let the predominant activity attain an abnormal hypertrophy, as by continuance of excess of function it will do, it then draws undue nourishment to itself, turns impressions to its own nature and shapes them to its liking, makes true observation and sound reasoning impossible. It is not now a well-formed and stable, but a deformed and unstable, mental organism which is in presence of surrounding nature, physical and human, and if it grows further in its intercourse therewith, it is likely to grow after the fashion of its deformity.

Mental pathologists would do well, then, to begin their treatises on insanity with a prelimi-

nary dissertation on mental malformities, tracing each leading variety back to its origin, and following the steps of its growth; so might they throw light on the ways by which the various modes of defective observation and reasoning that spring from the biasing passions and tempers of human nature shut it out from thorough and veracious converse with facts, and grow from generation to generation into the structural outcomes of positive mental malformity. The brain is, as it were, essentially a consolidation of memories, and these consolidate embodiments of fallacies of thought and feeling might be described justly as the various spirits of error made flesh. And if that be their true origin and organic meaning, their functions will naturally furnish the most striking displays of these errors, the organ giving out the kind of function which inspired its construction. A man could not think or do deceit habitually and naturally if his ancestors for generations before him had not thought or done deceit, and in the end incorporated its spirit into the structure of his brain. If they have lived in mean spheres and comparatively simple social relations, where there was not much call for self-restraint or need of delicacy of feeling, and he is launched into a larger human sphere and into more complex and refined social relations, where self-restraint and

respect for others are required, then the fundamental faults of his nature are brought into obtrusive exercise and conspicuous display.*

The intermediate region or border-land of thought and feeling between soundness and unsoundness of mind is a penumbral region which has been very fruitful of supernatural products. It is less fruitful now than once it was, because, like other enchanted regions, it has been surveyed in part, and taken possession of by positive knowledge, but it is yet not barren of wonders. Ghost-seers and ghost-seekers are still to be met with, and in such numbers and of such zeal at the present time as to have organized in England a society for the systematic prosecution of their researches; and they stand in no need of

* One might follow the principle, through a variety of exemplifications, into the explanations of the fundamental traits of individual characters. No conscious ingenuity applied diligently to doing the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time, ever equals, or can equal, the unconscious ingenuity with which certain natures, incarnating the discordant feelings and doings of their forefathers, succeed almost invariably in doing, with the most apt inaptness, the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time. Again, there are some persons who are uniformly unfortunate through life, who, failing in everything they put their hands to, might really seem to have been born under an unlucky star, just as there are persons who almost uniformly succeed; the fate which is thus inexorable against them, is the fate made for them by the absence of some good or the presence of some bad quality in their organization. Therefore it is invincible and always intervening to wreck their ventures. The circumstances of life become ever-recurring occasions of calling it into unfortunate exercise, or of revealing its unfortunate absence.

compassion who look compassionately down from their superior spiritual altitude on the inferior mental endowments of those destitute of their fine spiritual sense. Great, indeed, will be their reward if it be that which they joyfully anticipate—namely, the proof of the reality of the spiritual world by the incontestable evidence of facts, the demonstration of the supernatural by natural means, the vision of the soul by the eye of the body.

Without endorsing the observations of enthusiasts who are sometimes signally disqualified by natural temperament from observing accurately at all, and signally qualified to embrace eagerly that which suits its strain of quality, this much reason may fairly be allowed to the inquiries of those who seek for sensible evidence of supersensible things: first, that matter does undoubtedly exist in so fine, subtile, and, so to speak, spiritualized a state as to be imperceptible to human sense, and in that condition is amazingly active; second, that, though we cannot then perceive it by sense, it is possible we may nevertheless be affected powerfully by it. To leap, however, from this admission to the creation of a world of spiritual beings of human kind and form is to go backwards to the dark days of knowledge for the material and forms of more enlightened thought; for it is certain there has not been any discovery of new laws and

properties of matter in these latter days to warrant in the least the belief of its taking the visible form and substance of a ghost.

The case is really one of reversion to the old belief of savages, amongst whom everywhere spirits and ghosts have abounded; an example of the active revival or recrudescence of a surviving superstition, not a new acquisition of scientific thought; and the method of thought pursued is none other than the old method which filled nature with spirits in the past, making the counterfeit of knowledge where no knowledge was. It may seem to savour of science to think of spirit as a name for the most subtile manifestations of material substance, seeing that, however much men may subtilize and refine matter, they who owe all the material and forms of their ideas to sensory perception cannot immaterialize it entirely, cannot really conceive spiritual existence or agency save as endowed with some of its properties; but it is signal inconsistency thereupon to make grossly sensible to eye, or palpable to touch, or audible to ear, a material agency the essential character of which is a tenuity too fine for the appreciation of sense.

CHAPTER II.

HALLUCINATIONS AND ILLUSIONS.

That many theories concerning the supernatural have had their origin and sustenance in the operations of disordered mind cannot be disputed by any one who has bestowed the attention entitling him to have and to express an opinion on the subject. Of these disordered operations of mind the most striking outcomes notably are Hallucinations and Illusions, and Mania and Delusions. It is their nature, origin, and significance that I go on now to consider briefly and summarize compendiously.

By hallucination is meant such a false perception of sense as a person has when he sees, hears, touches, or otherwise apprehends as external, that which has no existence at all outside his consciousness, no objective basis—sees a person where there is no person, hears a voice where there is no voice. It is the creation of a fitting object of sense as cause of a special sensation where no such object

is; and it takes place in accordance with the well-known physiological law that it is possible, by stimulating artificially the nerve-centres of perception, to produce the same kind of perception, and sometimes in quite as vivid degree, as the natural stimulus of the proper external object would occasion. When there is an external object which excites the perception, but the nature of it is mistaken—far the most common case—it is usual and useful to describe the effect as illusion, although it is not possible in nature to draw a distinct line always between hallucination and illusion. Obviously a person may have both hallucination and illusion without derangement of the understanding, but in that case the false perception is commonly a transitory event, and at any rate he is able to correct it by suitable experience and to appreciate its delusive nature. No one has any difficulty in recognizing the internal origin of the flash of light which he perceives in consequence of a smart blow on the eye, and he who hears a roaring noise in his ears after hanging his head low down knows very well that the cause of the sound is not outside himself.

These examples illustrate one cause and mode of production of hallucinations, namely, a disturbance or disorder of the special nerve-centres of perception; and it matters not for present purposes whether that disturbance be a direct molecular commotion of the

nerve-element of which they are constituted, or a secondary effect of the disturbed supply or quality of blood by which their elements are nourished. The disturbance being temporary, the hallucinations disappear with its disappearance. In the deeper and more lasting brain-disorders which are part of some diseases, a similar cause produces hallucinations of a more decided character, and which do not disappear so quickly. For example, when the mind of the fever-stricken patient begins to wander, he sees among the familiar faces around him the visions of strange faces, which he knows at first are not real faces—only phantom-faces, though they are as vivid as real faces; perhaps they appear only when his eyes are shut or when the room is dark, and vanish when he opens his eyes or when the room is lit up. After a short while they become more frequent, and persist when his eyes are open and in broad daylight, and he gets perplexed and uncertain about their reality, assenting, perhaps, for the moment when assured that they are phantoms, but falling back instantly into troubled doubt. At last they get entire mastery of his belief, all uncertainty vanishes, he does not distinguish in the least between them and real figures, and he talks to them as real persons. He is now delirious or insane.

In the delirium of insanity it is not an uncommon

thing for the sufferer to see and hear persons who are the mere phantom-creations of his disordered brain; and when the delirium is of an acute character these are so vivid and active, have such full possession of his senses, usurp his attention so entirely, that real persons and voices can make no impression upon him. He is cut off from the actual world by the very intensity of their turbulent activity, which inhibits or blocks the true functions of the senses, so dislocating the connections of them that they seeing see not, hearing hear not, touching feel not; like a person in a nightmare, he lives in a tumultuous ideal world. When the delirium is of a partial character, as it sometimes is when the malady has become chronic, he is haunted by one or two special hallucinations, which cling to him in spite of the confuting evidence of facts, although, apart from them, he is capable of receiving and appreciating the impressions made upon his senses. Nothing is more remarkable sometimes than the entire credence yielded to a false perception almost or quite impossible in the nature of things, and certainly of inherent absurdity in the common judgment of all the rest of the world, by one who, in most other respects, seems to be in possession of his senses and reason.

How are we to think of it? That a certain limited area or tract of the brain has taken on a

morbid function, having broken loose from its natural vital equipoise with surrounding parts and functions, and continues to keep, by nutrition and exercise, the abnormal equilibrium into which it has settled; not otherwise than as a morbid growth or tumour in the midst of healthy structure follows its private laws of self-regarding function and development, without respect to the claims and restraints of the sound structure, from some element of which it perhaps made the first start of its growth into the foreign invader that it now is; or as an old-standing muscular spasm which has become habitual continues to work on its own account, without relation to the normal physiological movements among which the muscles engaged in it ought to take their co-ordinate place and part. Of such limited morbid brain-function the mental outcome would be a fixed hallucination. Viewed in that light, its growth in the mind is an apt physiological illustration of a supreme growth of egoism and a correlative decay of altruism.

The experimental physiologist has no difficulty in demonstrating the physical causation of hallucinations, since he can easily produce them artificially by suitable vitiation of the blood. For example, if any one has a poisonous dose of belladonna administered to him, he falls into a state of unquiet and busy delirium, in which he sees before him unreal persons

to whom he chatters, and unreal objects at which he stares and grasps, and is restlessly engaged in unreal transactions; all these juggles of the brain disappearing and he returning to his right senses when the poison which has circulated in it and deranged its functions has been removed from the body by the organs of excretion. He had not the least doubt of the objective reality of the imaginary objects so long as he was under its influence; he had not the least doubt of their entirely imaginary nature so soon as he had recovered from its poisonous effects. The tainted thought betrayed the tainted blood.

An oftentimes co-operating factor in this production of hallucinations by direct disturbance of the nerve-centres of perception, of which due note should not fail to be taken, is a certain natural inclination of the centres themselves to such irregular action. It was noticed how in fever the reason at first resisted the hallucinations, and only afterwards, as the disorder augmented, succumbed to them. Although the strongest reason could not withstand the invasion if the physical commotion were great enough, yet there is no doubt that brains differ much in natural stability, possessing different native powers of resistance to shocks, and that some fall into delirium from causes which would not disturb others so deeply. Now, it is especially in brains that have inherited a

certain predisposition to insanity, epilepsy, or allied nervous disorder, in which, therefore, the impulse to irregular function is innate, that the confederate centres, being more loosely bound together and more apt to act separately, are more likely to suffer dissolution of function. Then a slight cause may suffice to produce delirium—for example, a moderate fever, or a strain of emotion, or a pressure of overwork, or some other cause which would have had no serious effect upon a strong brain whose centres were stably organized.

That which easily falls into disorder easily continues in disorder. An event which is particularly liable to happen where the supreme federal government is naturally weak, because of an inherited instability of the confederate nerve-centres, is that, after the general delirium has passed away, a hallucination persists and cannot be got rid of; one cerebral tract or area continues to stand out in morbid function after the rest have subsided into their normal equilibrium. The person who seems to have returned in all other respects to his senses remains in that one respect out of his senses. Usually the morbid experience is corrected after a time by the sane experience of real intercourse with men and things; but not always. Now, if one of the features of his delirium perchance was the conviction that he

heard a voice from heaven, or that he received a supernatural communication in some other way, and if the hallucination persisted after his recovery, so that he—a person, perhaps, of enthusiastic and energetic temper and of great constitutional self-confidence—entertained the certitude of the objective reality of the supernatural experience, then it was likely in former times, however it may be now, that he would believe himself sealed and certified as a messenger or a prophet of God, a person

> "chosen from above,
> By inspiration of celestial grace,
> To work exceeding miracles on earth;" *

and would draw followers after him to believe as he believed. Not so likely now in civilized countries as it would have been some centuries ago, seeing that the atmosphere of thought has so much changed that it yields no support, is almost fatal, to a superstition of the kind. Then he could scarcely fail to make proselytes, according to his opportunities, on a large or small scale. But he might still attract some persons of that congenial neurotic temperament which is commonly accompanied with a signal conceit of self, and which its possessors are happy to believe means a peculiarly fine spiritual sense, although

* As Shakespeare makes Joan of Arc say of herself (*First Part Henry VI.*, act v. scene iv.).

medical psychologists may see good reason to interpret it differently.

It has been a belief almost as old as the hills, and as widespread as mankind, that abnormal and morbid nervous states had a supernatural significance: that some deity or demon was working in them. Among the ancients epilepsy was known as a sacred disease; it was thought to have something divine in it, as it and madness are still thought by Eastern nations to have. Its sudden and overwhelming invasion; the violence with which the whole body was instantly precipitated into convulsions, as if fearfully shaken by some demon that had taken possession of it or whose possession it was convulsively labouring to repel; the trance-like unconsciousness of the sufferer during the appalling commotion, and the occasional muttering of incoherent sentences by him;—these were sufficient to give it the appearance of a supernatural seizure.* There was doubtless another pregnant reason for this opinion, namely, the vivid hallucinations of one or of more than one sense which frequently occur in connection with the seizures. If it be the hearing

* "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away . . . And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him grievously; and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming" (Mark ix. 17–20, Revised Version).

which is affected, then a voice is heard with startling distinctness uttering threat, or command, or admonition; if it be a hallucination or vision, then a figure or face is seen illuminated by a bright or coloured halo of light produced like it internally by the disturbed centres of perception; if it be the muscular sense which is troubled, there is perhaps the bewildering feeling of the rising of the body into the air or of its sinking into the ground.* When the person comes to himself, the strange and startling experience of sense continues to vibrate actively in his memory, so as to keep up the most vivid impression for a time, and, as he is utterly unable to give any account to himself of its mysterious origin and nature, he is the more disposed to believe that he really saw or heard an angel from heaven, or had a visit from the Holy Ghost, or was carried up into heaven or down into hell. That some angelic apparitions and heavenly visions had this kind of origin is beyond doubt.

In any large lunatic asylum at the present day may be found confirmed epileptics who are subject to similar hallucinations in connection with their fits; excessively vain and childishly good-humoured when they are free from fits, but arrogant, irritable,

* "You see and feel it," says St. Theresa, "as a cloud, or a strong eagle rising upwards and carrying you away on its wings."

suspicious, and aggressive when they are suffering in connection with them, they evince then delusions of being Jesus Christ or some other great personage of Scripture, or of having received revelations from one or another of these personages. Very dangerous beings too they sometimes are in consequence of their hallucinations. For example: a few years ago a labourer in the Chatham Dockyard, who was epileptic and had once been confined as insane, suddenly killed a fellow-labourer at work near him. No motive was disclosed or discovered for the act at the time, for the men were not on bad terms; but at the criminal lunatic asylum to which he was sent after acquittal on the ground of insanity, he informed the medical officers that some years before he had received the Holy Ghost, that it came to him like a flash of light, and that his own eyes had been taken out, and other eyes, like balls of fire, substituted for them. Had this man lived in an age when there was much faith in supernatural and little or no knowledge of natural things; and had he then, instead of throwing his new-born energies convulsively into homicide, thrown them fanatically into a prophetic mission, declaring that the Holy Ghost had appeared to him in a vision of light, his own eyes being taken out and balls of fire put in their places;—would not his story have been received as true by many disciples, and

his mission believed to have had a supernatural origin?*

It is a traditional story that Mahomet was epileptic, and, if that were so, his visions, which certainly occurred to him during so-called swoons, may well have had an epileptic origin. The great change of character which he underwent, and the prophetic mission which he undertook, whatever their real inspiration, followed very extraordinary visions

* In an interesting article on "The Religious Sentiment in Epileptics," in the *Journal of Mental Science*, of January, 1873, Dr. Howden gives the particulars of several cases of the kind, all of which were confined in the Montrose Lunatic Asylum. One, who tried to convert the attendants and his fellow-patients by threatening them with God's judgments, said he was "a messenger sent by God to warn men to believe and to flee from the wrath to come." Another said that he had been in heaven, and described what he saw there (his description being evidently taken from the scenery of Canada, where he had lived as a child), and declared "sometimes that he was God, at other times Christ, and not unfrequently the devil." When questioned as to the ground of his belief, he generally said that "it had been revealed to him." Another says "that she has seen her heavenly Father, and that to-morrow she is to receive the crown of glory. She converses with Christ, and receives messages direct from heaven." Another gets very excited, and labours under delusions "such as that he is in heaven, or that he is struggling with the devil, whom, in the end, he generally vanquishes." Another patient was sure for two days that he was dead and that his soul was in heaven, and, after his return to work, when he spoke rationally on every other subject but that of his vision, he continued to believe that his soul had been carried into heaven (which he described, as he, a gardener, might well do), and that the vision had been sent to him by God as a means of conversion, whereby he had become a new man. Many similar illustrations of the character of epileptic hallucinations might be adduced.

and extreme mental commotion. The story is that, as he walked in solitary meditation in a lonely valley near Mecca, he was greeted suddenly with the words, "Hail to thee, O messenger of God!" On looking to the right hand and to the left to discover whom the voice came from, he saw nothing but stones and trees. It was soon afterwards that the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a vision on Mount Hira, and delivered to him the message of God of which he was chosen to be the prophet. Great was his trouble of mind, however, after the first vision of the angel, so great that he went in anxious distress to Kadijah, his wife, fearing that he was possessed; and, although she comforted and reassured him, his mental agony in the subsequent conflict of feelings was such that he several times thought of ending his life by throwing himself off Mount Hira. Was the vision, then, after all, the vision, and the voice the voice, of an epileptic trance?

The devout Mussulman will repudiate with natural indignation this natural explanation of what he believes to have been a supernatural event; but the Christian may well think it the charitable interpretation of what he must else rank as imposture—not unbiased towards the worse interpretation by the knowledge how much imposture religious Mahdis in the East are wont to mix with their prophetic pretensions. But in what light ought the devout

Mahometan to view the miraculous vision by which Saul, the fiery persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, was converted from breathing threatenings and slaughters against them into the most passionate and energetic of His apostles? "As he journeyed to Damascus suddenly there shined round him a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou? And the voice answered, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the voice answered that he should arise and undertake the mission for which the Lord had appeared unto him—to be a minister and a witness both of that which he had seen and of those things which he should see. When Saul rose from the ground he was blind, and he remained blind for three days, neither eating nor drinking all that time. And this was the crisis of the profound revolution of feeling and thought which, in silent gestation probably for some time before, now burst forth in him, and the commencement of the apostolic mission to which he thenceforth abandoned himself with indefatigable zeal, unparalleled energy and sagacity, and absolute devotion. The devout Christian will resent the insulting impiety of a natural explanation

of what he regards reverentially as a miraculous event; but how can the Mahometan, whose understanding is not overawed by fit faith into the devout belief of what otherwise would be incredible, be expected to exhibit a similar unquestioning credence?

These illustrations, if they have the character ascribed to them, are of such tremendous significance and so sufficing as to render other illustrations, which would be weak by comparison, unnecessary. But such are not wanting. Ann Lee, founder of the so-called Shakers, is said to have been epileptic; and she had visions of the Saviour, who, she alleged, "became one with her in body and spirit." The apostle of the so-called Church of the New Jerusalem, Emmanuel Swedenborg, who professed to be in daily intercourse with angels and to receive revelations from them, was subject at one time of his life to seizures which were closely akin to, if they were not actually, epilepsy.* The Siberian schamans or medicine-men, who pretend to have intercourse with invisible powers and with the spirits of the dead, working themselves, like the priestesses of the ancient oracle of Delphi, into a state of frenzy, in which they foam at the mouth and are convulsed, always select by preference,

* *Emmanuel Swedenborg: his Life and Writings*, by William White. In my essay on Swedenborg, in the second edition of *Body and Mind*, I have set forth at length the facts relating to his mental state, and the inferences which they warrant.

for pupils of their mysteries, boys who are subject to epileptic attacks. When the breath of inspiration came upon the Delphic priestess, she cried out, "Behold the god! behold the god!" and immediately fell backward in convulsive struggles, foaming at the mouth, and began to prophesy.* Among the Patagonians those seized with falling sickness or St. Vitus's dance were selected for magicians; and always those taken were nervous and excitable men, who, in uttering oracles, fell into actual convulsions. Thus it appears clearly that, in different ages and among different peoples in all parts of the world, persons subject to epilepsy or similar convulsive seizures have, by natural selection, come conspicuously to the front as the favourite organs, the most fit instruments, of supernatural inspirations. The epileptic temperament, by itself and apart from its ordinary convulsive incidents, seems specially propitious to that all-absorbing enthusiasm in which the mind, rapt above itself in a sort of ecstasy or exaltation of its whole energies, has engendered in it the opinion of a divine inflation or possession.†

* Having prepared for, or actually provoked, the convulsions, it is said, by drinking laurel-water, the active principle of which is prussic acid. (Dr. Paris's *Pharmacologia.*)

† Thus, indeed, was the word created in the first instance (ἔνθεος, full of God). Given a nervous, excitable, and unstable temperament to begin with, and superadd to that its earnest engagement in religious exercises of thought and feeling, which strain its sensibilities and

How far are these subjects of supernatural communications, who fall into foamings and convulsions, and see visions and dream dreams, conscious impostors? It is a question very difficult to answer, since it is not really possible, either for themselves or for others, to separate the real and the simulated in their feelings and doings. That they designedly bring on genuine convulsions and hallucinations sometimes by the mode of life which they adopt, and by the excitement which they kindle and foment, is beyond question; sometimes, too, it is certain that they wilfully exaggerate phenomena which are within their control in the first instance, but once they have been set going soon get beyond it; and sometimes there can be little doubt that the whole business is systematically feigned.

In no case, however, are they, from their point of

powers to the utmost, and what more natural than such outbreaks of functional instability as hallucinations and convulsions? The lives of the saints abound with instances: foremost in eminence Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Order of Jesuits, who, concentrating his fervent zeal and all the energies of his faculties on the one aim of strengthening Catholicism, became subject to appropriate ecstasies and visions, hearing voices from heaven, and seeing the Virgin Mary, who encouraged him in his mission. St. Theresa was another distinguished instance. Among Protestants, George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, or so-called Quakers, may take first place, who abandoning his family early in his life, wore for years a leathern suit which he made for himself, fasting, praying, meditating, and struggling against temptation, and ended by hearing a voice which consoled him and having revelations which astonished him.

view, the bare impostors which they appear to the dispassionate outsider who coolly watches the performance. Probably they have been imbued with the conviction of a particular esoteric function, brought up to think the work supernatural, educated in the practice of it, stimulated to exaggeration by success, and have so grown to the habit of it by frequent performance that it has become their second nature, and they are not sincerely conscious of the imposture which they practise; it is impossible for them to get outside the infected atmosphere of the familiar ceremony, so as to see and feel the thing as it is and as it looks to others; they are like persons who, having been trained to the habitual employment of certain frauds in a particular trade or profession, lose sense of the real guilt of the practice by growing into the conventional estimate and feeling of it as a legitimate custom of the business, although they might revolt indignantly against similar fraud which was presented to them for the first time in a pure atmosphere and in the naked simplicity of its real nature. And almost always, let it be remembered, there is in such cases the propitious mental temperament at the outset, and that with the native defect there goes along naturally a lack of thorough sincerity and stable unity of mental being predisposing to inconsistencies or actual incoherences of development.

Another condition of things propitious to the generation of hallucinations is severe exhaustion of brain, whether owing to mental or to bodily causes. The shipwrecked sailor, when delirious from long privation of food and drink, is apt to have tantalizing dreams and visions of food and water; they are the illusive creations of his urgent needs.* The long fastings, the scourgings, the exposure, and other mortifications of the body practised by the religious ascetic, who, withdrawing from the society of men to some desert solitude, passed a lonely life in meditation, prayers, and penances, brought his monotonously and specially exercised brain to such a degree of separation from the ordinary and wholesome impressions of sense, and such a state of irritable weakness, that he frequently saw visions which, according to his moods of feeling, were visions of angels who consoled him in his sufferings, or visions of devils who tempted and tormented him. Of such brain-sick kind were the temptations of St. Anthony and other saints, who, in order to subdue the besetting lusts of mind which savour most of flesh, subjected their bodies to the extremest mortifications which a perverse ingenuity could devise:

* Of Christ, after fasting forty days in the wilderness, Milton says—

"He slept,
And dreamed, as appetite is wont to dream,
Of meats and drinks, Nature's refreshment sweet."

Paradise Regained, bk. ii. 264.

their visions were no better than the juggles of starved brains. A Mahometan receipt, which is in successful use now for summoning spirits, is to fast seven days in a lonely place, burning such incense as benzoin, aloe-wood, mastic, and other odoriferous wood from the Soudan, and to read a certain chapter from the Koran a thousand and one times in the seven days. The entire solitude, the long fasting, the monotonous exercise of uninterested attention, and the stimulation of the exhausted and irritable brain by the aromatic and acrid vapours, have such an effect in due course that drums are beaten, flags hoisted, and spirits seen full of light and of beautiful and benign aspect.* Again we are in face of a general fact of special and most weighty significance —that in all places and in all times abnormal or

* *Upper Egypt: its People and Products*, p. 386, by Dr. Klunzinger.

It is a universal experience that fasting provokes dreams, hallucinations, ecstasies, and the like, which have been considered to be so many ways of communication with the Deity. "Amongst all the indigenous races of North America, prolonged fasting is regarded as the means *par excellence* of securing supernatural inspiration. The Redskin, to become a sorcerer or to secure a revelation from his *totem*, or the Eskimo to become *Angekok*, will endure the most appalling fasts." (Réville's *Hibbert Lectures*, 1884, p. 101.)

At the present time there appears to be a sect of religious enthusiasts in Russia who are known as the "Folk of the Godly Nest," the members of which, peasants of Bessarabia, are in the habit of digging a grave—a nest, they call it—in their earth-floors or gardens, where they retire and are covered over with a lid. After fasting there completely for a considerable time, they assert that they see visions of saints and devils.

morbid states of the nervous system, induced by artificial means, have been the esteemed ways of communication with the supernatural.*

It happens now and then that sick persons, on their deathbeds, see visions which are sometimes of a joyful, oftentimes of an indifferent, occasionally of an appalling character.† This experience, which is not limited to any country or time, or to the disciples of any religion, has most often befallen, not when death was due to acute disease or accident, and came as an abrupt event, but when it came gradually as the end

* There was a real conformity to natural laws, whatever the supernatural agency at work, in the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, when, after His fast of forty days, Satan presented suddenly

> "A table richly spread, in regal mode,
> With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
> And savour."
>
> *Paradise Regained*, bk. ii. 340.

† Seldom, perhaps, if ever, such horrid apparition as Shakespeare represents Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, to have had in the terrible agony of his death—

> "O, torture me no more! I will confess.
> Alive again? Then show me where he is;
> I'll give a thousand pound to look upon him.
> He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them.
> Comb down his hair; look, look! it stands upright,
> Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul!"

Well might the compassionate king, beholding the sad spectacle, be moved to exclaim!—

> "Ah! what a sign it is of evil life,
> When death's approach is seen so terrible!"
>
> *Second Part Henry VI.*, act iii. scene iii.

of exhaustion from wasting disease. Consumptive persons seem to be particularly liable—owing to their slow decay of strength, and to the frequent persistence of an irritable nervous animation even to the last—to these deathbed visions; accordingly, many of the telling scenes that have made solemn impressions on those who witnessed and related them have occurred in deaths from this wasting disease. As the brain-functions flicker before their extinction, long-forgotten scenes and faces of the past, far-off events of childhood and youth, that seemed quite obliterated from the mind, arise unbidden in memory with startling brightness and are seen as evanescent visions. The last act of the dying mother is perhaps to call eagerly the name of her dead child, whose face she suddenly sees; the last act of the expiring old man to start at the sight of his mother's face as it was bent over him in childhood. The physical shock of the very instant of death may be the abrupt occasion of such hallucinations.

How easy, then, to suppose, how hard not to hope, and, hoping, to believe, that in that supreme and solemn moment is granted a fore-glimpse into the world of spirits which is just about to open!—that, as the material grossness of earth falls away, the nearly emancipated spirit, hovering on the brink of its new life, and with vision purged of earthly

dross, reaches such a state of rarefaction, exaltation, and detachment, as to enjoy a momentary penetration into the supernatural world! Those who believe this to be so, and found on it a confident argument for belief in a future life, ought to call to mind and duly weigh this reflection, that the fever-stricken savage, when abandoned to die by his companions, if he chances to recover unexpectedly and rejoin them, sometimes recounts the particulars of his visit to the world of spirits during the crisis of his disease, and tells a detailed story of the doings of his dead relatives there, which are then very much like their gross doings when on earth.*

The vital question, of course, is whether, during the final decay of faculties in the last stage of mental and physical prostration, when life is flickering before it expires, and the dying person is capable only of a few signs of feeble animation, there is suddenly acquired by him a power and kind of insight the like of which he never had before when he was in health and vigour. Is it lawful to base on the expiring energies of a brain which "doth by the feeble comments that it makes foretell the ending of mortality" the momentous conclusion of living beings in a supernatural world? If it be, then the conclusion necessarily follows that all the

* For ample evidence, see Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.

insight of man's mind when he is strong and well, and all the knowledge which he has painfully accumulated through the natural avenues of sense, are products of a method which has no guarantee of lasting validity, and which, being of provisional value only, may be discredited and supplanted at any moment by the sudden opening in him of a higher spiritual vision; and a further conclusion be that this sort of vision, contrary to all natural experience, will be at its best when life is at its lowest, the soundest mind be displayed in the unsoundest body. What, in such case, would be the right aim and the bounden duty of a devout person who was eager to arrive at the knowledge of things spiritual? To follow the revolting example of the unclean ascetic, and to subject his body systematically to the severest fastings, scourgings, and other mortifications, in order to reduce vitality to its lowest ebb. On the other hand, if such visions be only the delirious comments of expiring brain-energies, the conclusion must be that, so far from sustaining the opinion of a spiritual life, they yield substantial support to the opinion that all the intercourse with supernatural beings which has ever been alleged to have taken place ought to be rigorously investigated in the light of their natural origin and being; and the further conclusion follow, that a sane body is the surest

foundation of a sane mind.* It is a simple question of scientific probability in the end, since revelation, though it guarantee the spiritual world, does not guarantee in any respect the sick man's particular vision of it: does he, in the half-delirious state of brain before death, see a phantom-vision, such as is confessedly seen often in similar brain-states, or is a gift of supernatural insight then vouchsafed to him for the first time?

* We are dealing here only with physical disorder as the occasion of positive hallucination, but the lesson of the fact is a large one; for it ought always to be borne in mind, in relation to observation, that similar disorder of a milder character, of which the individual may be entirely unaware, produces its proportionate effects in causing *error* of sense and thought. Nothing can be more foolish in most cases than to receive the counsels of a dying man regarding important practical events as if they were pure and sacred wisdom; they commonly reflect and betray the weakness of his expiring nature. Experienced lawyers know well how much the provisions of a will made in such circumstances are at the mercy of the suggestions or persuasions of those who are prompting or assisting the dying man in the business. "I am afraid to say," remarked an old family lawyer, "how many wills I have made in my time." Whosoever wishes to have a truly disposing mind in making his testamentary bequests will not put off the business until he has only a death-bed judgment.

CHAPTER III.

HALLUCINATIONS AND ILLUSIONS—*Continued.*

THE examples of hallucinations which have been brought forward thus far have been illustrations of their mode of origin in direct disturbance of the senses or of their sensory nerve-centres or tracks; they have originated there and have then imposed themselves upon belief. The person has not seen or heard what he was thinking or believing at the moment, but has been made to think or believe what he has seemed to hear or see. Not otherwise than as happens often in dreams, where the strange sensory and notional experiences arising mysteriously in the mind without any co-operation of will, and following no known order of relation and succession, have been universally thought to mean supernatural instruction; abundant examples of which might be adduced, were not Solomon's authority enough, who says that "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, then God openeth the ears of men, and sealeth

their instruction." It now remains to consider the mode of origin of hallucination in the reverse order—namely, in a vividly conceived notion or belief which imposes itself upon sense. For the senses and reason reciprocally trick one another; and as the senses may present subjective appearances to thought as objective and deceive it, so thought in turn subjugates the senses sometimes, and compels them to perceive purely internal impressions as external objects.

At this point it will be well to call to mind for a moment what has been previously said concerning the nature of ordinary perception—how that in each perception a person for the most part sees only a very small part of that which he thinks he sees, the mind contributing, by virtue of its former experiences, what is necessary to fill up the image. The visual impression is, indeed, no more than a sign to which experience has taught him to give its proper meaning—a sign which, without the complementary contributions of the instructed mind, would be meaningless, just as a written or spoken word of foreign language is meaningless to one who has not been instructed what to mean by it; or just as a person whose mind is occupied with other things may read familiar words to himself or aloud without any understanding of their meaning. It is (to speak in physical imagery)

one point in a circuit at which the current of that circuit may be excited, the current thereof being, when the circuit is complete, the perception—a true perception, therefore, if each of all the other sensory points, the special sense-junctions, in the circuit will, as tacitly assumed, excite the same current when individually brought to the test by the direct stimulus of the object. Of ordinary perception it may be truly said, then, that it is in great part illusion; that no one, on occasion of it, actually has nearly so much of the objective experience as he seems to have; that he sees a part only, which, being sufficient to suggest the whole, is the symbol of much that he does not see, but takes for granted. It is an illusion, however, which the test of a complete experience, were it made, would prove to be well grounded in reality; a theory which would be verified by facts, were the verification rigorously made; a sort of promise to pay on demand which, when presented, would be met by instant payment.

Here is made manifest an easy opening for illusion and the source of one of the most common causes of erroneous observation. The idea in the mind, if it be not the fit idea of the perception, dominates the true perception, is mistaken for it, and so prevents it by taking its place; and it is evident that a subjective activity of this kind, short of the degree

necessary to produce actual hallucination, will suffice to produce illusion and error. Only by the test of actual experience, rigorously and completely applied, can it be proved to be ungrounded, or inadequately grounded, in reality—proved, that is to say, to be, as it is, a promise of reality which will not be met, or met adequately, by fulfilment on demand. And the worst of it is that the individual, being at one and the same time the experimenter and the subject of experiment, is incapacitated from a searching and satisfactory application of the test of experience; the promise to pay on demand has been made to himself, and he, by secret self-collusion, shrinks from exacting rigorous fulfilment. He will have recourse for corrective help to the accredited standard of the general and unbiased experience of his kind if he is wise. It is notorious that, if any one goes to look at something, or to taste something, or to feel something, with a strongly preconceived notion of what it is that he is going to see, taste, or touch, he is pretty sure to have a mistaken perception—to perceive that which he thinks the thing is, not what it is really. The foregone conclusion forestalls sense and imposes upon it, making the experiment an illusion; the mental prepossession prevents a true possession of the object. It is an effect of the same kind as, though of less degree than, that which is exhibited by the person

who, having been put into a so-called mesmeric or hypnotic trance, when most of his mental functions are thrown into abeyance, sees, hears, tastes, touches, or smells whatever he is boldly assured by the operator that he sees, hears, tastes, touches, or smells, and does so even when there is no external impression at all made upon sense.

A proved efficient cause of hallucination, then, is a vividly conceived idea which is so intense, and so isolated thereby from transmission of its energy along the tracks of other ideas in reflection, that it is projected outwards into what seems an actual perception —in the case of sight, for example, a mental image so vivid as to become a visual image; in the case of hearing, an idea so intense as to become a voice.*

The traditional habit of separating mind from body by an impassable chasm of origin, nature, and destiny, leads to an ever-recurring traditional astonishment and admiring curiosity at striking instances of the operation of mind in physiological processes, as if they were something remarkable and outside the usual order of things; so much so that professed

* That the hallucination should be seen more vividly, and seem more real sometimes than the actual object, is not surprising when we reflect that perception is always an internal experience, and that in this case the very intensity of the experience, by virtue of which, or of its almost isolated activity, it creates the object, must naturally make the impression more vivid, and therefore seem more real.

psychologists believe they are conceding a great deal to the physiologist, and impregnating their own speculations with a savour of physiological substance, when they interpolate the facts as excrescences on their systems, without being at the pains, or having the power, to assimilate them. In actual fact there is nothing more wonderful in the mind affecting the body than there is in the heart affecting the individual's feelings of warmth or well-being, such operations of it being as regular, constant, and familiar in daily life as any other physiological process. Here, as elsewhere, in craning with astonishment after extraordinary instances, people stoop not to take note of ordinary instances.

How many times and to how many persons has it happened to experience that the vivid expectation of pain on the making a movement by a rheumatic muscle intensifies the pain when the movement is made!—which may indeed be made sometimes without any pain at all when the attention is distracted from it. And yet how little has the full physiological lesson of so simple and familiar a fact, which, justly appreciated, is not less instructive than a thousand more striking facts of the same sort, been marked and appreciated! It is within every one's experience that the earnestly expectant idea of a particular sensation in a part of the body suffices

sometimes to cause the sensation; and there are persons who can go further than that, and see or feel what they conceive vividly. Sir Isaac Newton said of himself that he could at any time call up a spectrum of the sun in the dark by intense direction of his mind to the idea, "as when a man looks earnestly to see a thing which is difficult to be seen." Goethe had a similar power of making certain mental images sensible to sight, and a distinguished French novelist, Balzac, alleged that when he wrote the story of the poisoning of one of the characters in his novel by arsenic, he had so distinct a taste of arsenic in his mouth afterwards that he was himself poisoned and vomited his dinner;* all the more interesting and effective proof of the power of imagination over sense, seeing that arsenic owes its favour with the secret poisoner in great measure to its being practically tasteless!

Mental representation so intense as to become mental presentation is a faculty of mind apt especially to be met with among certain artists. It was very remarkable in that strange and eccentric genius, William Blake, who used habitually to see his conceptions as actual images or visions. "You have only to work up imagination to the state of vision and the thing is done," was his account of the process. Dr.

* M. Taine (*De l'Intelligence*) is the authority for this statement.

Wigan relates the sad but instructive story of a skilful painter whom he knew, and who, before going mad, painted portraits with a marvellous rapidity, having painted as many as three hundred in one year. The secret of his rapidity and success was that he required only one sitting and painted with extraordinary facility. This was the unfortunate painter's account of his method: "When a sitter came, I looked at him attentively for half an hour, sketching from time to time on the canvas. I wanted no more; I put away my canvas, and took another sitter. When I wished to resume my first portrait, I took the man and sat him in the chair, where I saw him as distinctly as if he had been before me in his own proper person—I may almost say more vividly. I looked from time to time at the imaginary figure, then worked with my pencil, then referred to the countenance, and so on, just as I should have done had the sitter been there. When I looked at the chair, I saw the man."* After a time, however, he lost the power of distinguishing between the imaginary and the real person, addressing the one as if he were the other, became insane, and was sent to an asylum.

A special instruction of these examples lies in the illustration which they furnish of the kind of mental constitution most apt to the transformation of the

* *The Duality of the Brain*, by Alfred Wigan, M.D.

subjective image into objective form, and of the harm which the habit of the practice does to the mental solidarity; for its tendency inevitably is to loosen further the confederate bonds which its occurrence at all evinces, perhaps, to be already loose enough naturally. It is not because the unstable temperament occurs in an adult that it is any more sane and safe fundamentally than the sensitive and highly imaginative temperament of the nervous child which sees its musings as actual scenes and events, and dies eventually perhaps of water or of tubercle on its brain. Not in a one-sided activity and culture of it, moreover, but in a many-sided exercise and culture, is the best physical and moral management of it; the end to be aimed at being to inform, strengthen, and consolidate the weak and loose mental constitution of the brain, by training it systematically to a just estimate of the proportion of things and of self, and incorporating into it a good store of the ballasting common sense of the kind. To seek and affect the special circumstances that suit a predominant special quality of character, as the natural tendency is, is not the way to improve and strengthen the character; the right way to do that is to train the character to suit any circumstances. Certainly it will be a question of original constitution of mind how far that can be done successfully. If it cannot be done, one may be content

to see the special faculty utilized to its utmost, even though it be at a ruinous cost to the individual. A largely endowed nature, like Goethe's, is capable of many-sided culture and activity; a person like Blake, if he had not been what he was, might have been nothing and have died in a lunatic asylum.

The voluntary intensification of idea unto the pitch of hallucination is much helped always, and sometimes altogether surpassed, by involuntary intensification of it owing to strong emotional agitation, to which weak brains are specially liable; for the equilibrium of the centres and the consequent poise of their faculties are thereby easily overthrown. A stronger-built mind than Macbeth's might have gone through the fearful tumult of conflicting feelings which he went through, and have done the bloody business which he did, without succumbing to the humiliating hallucinations of the dagger and of Banquo's ghost; and a person of larger sympathies, more solid judgment, and less intense self-love than Brutus had, might have done all that he did, and then confronted his fate at Philippi, without seeing beforehand the ominous spectre of his evil genius.*

* Not unjustly describable, perhaps, as the foremost and foolishest assassin of all time; not because of any remarkable greatness of his own character, nor of any special merit in the particular business of that murder, but because he struck down at a most critical time "the foremost man of all the world"—when one empire embraced the whole

If hallucinations are engendered now in the way just described, it is safe to conclude that they were often engendered so in times past, when their real nature, so far from being understood in the least, could not have been suspected. It was natural then, nay inevitable, that they should be thought to be spiritual or supernatural apparitions. What other interpretation could be given of them? In the nature of things, they could not fail to occur more easily to savage and barbarous people, whose minds were less amply stored with faculties, and these less compactly confederate, just as they occur more readily in young children than in adults; and, occurring, they would be more likely to compel belief, seeing that there was no store of natural knowledge to sit in judgment upon them, much less to give a natural explanation of them. The brain-centres being more complex and more compactly held together in civilized persons, consolidate with the stable organization of more numerous and true relations with external nature, there is less facility for a part to let itself go out of relations with other parts into illusive activity. Moreover, another and allied result of the more complex and compact mental fabric is the inevitable cessation of childish imaginations concerning the supernatural;

known world nearly—in the mean interests of an aristocratic conspiracy, sincerely believing that his fruitless crime was a grand and glorious deed of patriotism.

wild flights of the kind are impossible from the solid basis of assimilated fact; imagination is imbued with the sober spirit of a large capitalized experience.

No more does the awed rustic, with palpitating heart, hurry past the churchyard at night; for the ghost is not seen there now as once it was, because the ghost is not believed in now as once it was. The idea cannot attain by intensification the vivid energy necessary to become an image; it lacks the adequate basis of emotional belief. Should it rise in the mind, it is instantly and unconsciously checked and controlled, through a latent process of inhibition, by the positive knowledge that is incorporate in the structure of a well-balanced and fairly cultured brain; it cannot stir an emotional agitation there; for the accumulations of natural knowledge which constitute the mental fabric of the modern disbelief in ghosts signify definitely organized cerebral tracts that exert a silent, steady, effective inhibitory influence, and so occasion an immediate and instinctive repression of the uprising idea. The vulgar mind—and every mind was once vulgar in this respect—is exceedingly prone to accept the unknown for the possible (*omne ignotum pro possibili*), because it is destitute of the knowledge necessary to instruct it with regard to what is possible and what not; it is natural for it, with its strong propensity to the wonderful, to believe

what it would not be natural for those to believe who have wider and deeper knowledge of what is and what is possible in the order of things: as the region of the positively known increases, the region of the possible and the wonderful decreases.

It is no wonder, then, that the belief in ghosts and other spiritual apparitions has prevailed universally amongst all peoples in all times and places, and still prevails extensively among savages; and inasmuch as a belief so widely prevalent must have its deep foundations either in the facts of nature or in the constitution of human nature, there is no escape from the necessity of accounting scientifically for the apparitions as coinages of brain such as "ecstasy is very cunning in," or of frankly acknowledging them to be indubitable instances of invisible inhabitants of an unknown world, taking human or other shape (for dogs and other animals have frequently thus appeared) and becoming visible to men. The little room which they occupy now in human thought in comparison with the large room which they once occupied, and the rarity of their alleged occurrence now in comparison with the frequency of their occurrence in past times, are proof that the tendency of modern inquiry and thought is against them.

In this connection it is proper to note that the apparitions seen in different times and places have

always been in keeping with the ideas or beliefs of the age and people. Those of barbarous peoples are different from those of savage peoples, and those of cultured peoples different from those of savages; they change in character with the changing phases of intellectual development. Apparitions of Satan were not uncommon in the Middle Ages, though they seldom or never occur now. Luther's notions of the personality and doings of Satan were very much on a par with those of a Saxon peasant of his time, he having no doubt whatever that witches frequently had carnal intercourse with their familiar devils; he was not surprised, therefore, to see the devil come into his cell and make a great noise behind the stove, and to hear him walking in the cloister above his cell at night. But is there an instance on record of ancient Greek or Roman seeing the devil? Or did ever ancient Greek or Roman, by private bargain, sell his soul to him for earthly pleasure and prosperity, as so many persons suffered death for doing in the Middle Ages? The Satan whom Luther assaulted by flinging an inkstand at his head had not then been invented, and therefore, the notion of him not existing, hallucination did not take his shape.

When Christianity spread among the heathen, their old pagan gods were dethroned, banished to solitary places and dreary caverns in the forests and on the

hills, stigmatized as evil spirits, and declared to be the agents of the calamities, sicknesses, and other ills which men suffered; for it has often been with religions as with nations when they went to war, the new gods of the triumphant faith degraded the vanquished gods of the old faith into devils, as the conquering nations made slaves of the conquered. Thus the discrowned gods were effectually discredited and made hateful by the priests of the new faith; and when a few of their belated worshippers, clinging affectionately to the old beliefs, or relapsing into them, met together in lonely places for secret sacrifices, they were accused of practising witchcraft with their familiar spirits, and, by their evil help, of raising storms, destroying cattle, causing wasting diseases, and the like malignant mischief. Their heresy was cleverly branded with a most odious and fatal stigma. It is hard to say whether Satan survives still in person and in power, the last survival of these dethroned gods, so vague, inconsistent, and obscure is the language of those who talk and write about him; but if he does, it is only as the dim image of his old self, and with the shadow of his former power and state.*

What would a Roman cardinal or an English arch-

* He survives in one, and that at all times the most effective, *mode* of him—viz. in man's devilish behaviour to man; for now, as always is the adage justified, *Homo homini dæmon*, that is to say, "Man's devil is man."

bishop, were he to think sincerely and to express sincerely what he thinks, say now of Luther's opinion that the devil was the cause of devastating storms and other calamities; and that blind, lame, dumb persons and idiots were persons in whom devils had established themselves, while physicians, who tried to cure their infirmities as though they proceeded from natural causes, were ignorant blockheads, who knew nothing of the power of the devil? Barbarous nations everywhere still hold much the same opinions. To them, entirely ignorant of its natural causes, it is impossible to think of disease in any other light than as the work of a malevolent demon or spirit which causes it, just as some theologians of the present day, entirely ignorant of nervous functions, are unable to think of a nervous ecstasy in a spiritually minded hysterical person but as the effect and means of a supernatural inspiration.* The South African who believes in a

* See note at end of Part II. (p. 259). "Like the Australians, the Timorese cannot understand why any one should ever die unless he be killed; so they attribute both sickness and natural death to the influence of some malevolent existence, which they believe eats up the spirit of the blighted person after death. As soon, therefore, as the sick person has died, the *swangi* (or person in whom the evil spirit has taken up its residence, and who is considered to be in collusion with it), whom their fanaticism easily discovers, used with his whole family to be seized—till it was made a capital crime by the Portuguese so to do—bound hand and foot, and either impaled or buried alive, and their goods confiscated for the benefit of the accusers and the lord of the soil." (*A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 438, by H. O. Forbes.)

god with a crooked leg sees him in dreams and visions with a crooked leg.* In the main, the hallucinations of an epoch reflect its dominant feelings and ideas.

So much, for the two principal modes of origin of hallucinations—that is to say, either primarily in the senses, or their sensory and associated motor tracts, or primarily in the higher centres of thought.† The division is a necessary one, because the distinction is evident between hallucinations that are in manifest relation with the thoughts, and therefore of more specially mental origin and nurture, and hallucinations that are not in manifest relations with the thoughts, being of sensory and, so to speak, more bodily origin and nurture. What can be more plainly sensory in their place of origin than the hallucinations exhibited in *delirium tremens* and other forms of alcoholism, where rats or mice are seen running over the bed-clothes, serpents gliding along the floor, toads squatting on the wall, and the like?‡ On the other hand,

It is much the same among barbarous nations of Africa, who knowing how they suffer injury and death frequently at the hands of their kind, conclude that sickness and death are caused by the secret sorcery of some malignant enemy, or by the evil spirit of one of their kind, whose invisible nature enables him to work any amount of mysterious mischief.

* Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, i. 306. He quotes from Livingstone.

† It is customary to think of hallucination in relation to sense, and to speak of it as error of perception, which, of course, it is; but that ought not to lead to the overlooking, as it commonly does, of the motor element in its constitution.

‡ Or the hallucinations which sometimes go before and herald an

what can more clearly show the part taken by thought in the origin and nurture of hallucinations than the story told by Baillarger * of the woman who believed herself to be condemned to prison, and was continually hearing the voice of the prefect of police threatening her? One day she was in great spirits because she had beaten the prefect at the experiment of guessing odd or even: she had taken at hazard some pieces of money out of her pocket, and waited for the voice to say "odd" or "even," and as soon as she heard it distinctly she looked at the coins, and found it was wrong. Many times she had tried the experiment before, but always with the result that the voice had been right; but on all these previous occasions she herself had known the number of the pieces of money, whereas on the last she was ignorant whether the number was odd or even. However, notwithstanding the needful distinction, it is certain that the origin of hallucinations is most often a mixed one, and their nature always so, when their true character is not appreciated by the subject; sense and thought combining to produce the effect, and it being impossible to say which is first and most at fault. Nor could it well be otherwise, seeing how intimate and essential

attack of apoplexy, when there seems to be a continual ringing of bells in his ears, or bad smells persistently afflict the sufferer.

* In his well-known and excellent essay, "Des Hallucinations:" *Mém. de l'Acad. de Médecine*, 1846.

is the connection between the respective nerve-centres of thought and sense, whereby they fail not to act together in close sympathy and continuity of function. One consideration more in this connection: that in most cases in which an idea of the thought-centres becomes a hallucination compelling belief, and in most cases in which hallucination originating in the senses overrules reason, there is discoverable, when adequate inquiry is made (if the case be not one of serious disease), a natural or acquired infirmity of nervous constitution.

There is an additional and significant interest in the hallucination that is in vital relation with the thought—namely, that, although the hallucination is baseless phantom, the thought may none the less be good and valid, the hallucination being a sort of incidental dross thrown off by its glowing heat. When it is gravely considered how great a part hallucinations have played sometimes at critical periods of human history, being regarded as divine visions, and inspiring the subjects of them with the conviction of supernatural countenance and help in the great work accomplished by them, the cynic might well triumph, and the believer in the hopes of his kind despair, were it obligatory to believe that human progress ever rested entirely on such illusive basis. But if a person has been animated by

a fervent belief, and has done some great work in the world under that ardent inspiration, what matters it that he had a helpful hallucination? The primary and real agent in the production of the effect was not the incidental hallucination, but the antecedent or concomitant heat of feeling and faith, and the work done, whether good or bad, was none the less real because it had not the particular supernatural sign claimed for it. Had Mahomet never seen the angel Gabriel, it is probable that the great mission of overthrowing idolatry and polytheism, and of welding scattered tribes into a powerful nation, would have been accomplished by him or by some other prophet who, conceiving the grand thought and welding his energies into compact unity of aim by glowing feeling, would have risen up to do what the world had at heart at that time. And had any one else, not having Mahomet's faith and faculty, and not, like him, prepared by many hours of silent meditation and agonizing wrestling of thought and feeling to take up the mighty work, seen the angel Gabriel or any number of angels many times, he would not have accomplished it. It was a work of destined natural development, a new birth of time preordained in the course thereof, which, never having been up to then, might well seem supernatural to those who knew only what was and had been, and to need and to have a divine inspira-

tion. What more natural than that the chosen and nature-inspired organ of it, believing in a direct governance of the world by God, and in himself as the immediate instrument of the divine purpose, should regard the inspiration which thrilled him as the word or voice of God in him! And from that conviction how short and easy and natural the step to attribute external reality to it, whether visible appearance or articulate voice! Nay, if God inspire the thought, and the thought beget the hallucination, and the hallucination aid the individual, why not reverently regard the hallucination as the special means divinely provided and used at the time for the end?* Little as we like the notion, it has, perhaps, been so willed in the mysterious counsels of creation that the best work of the world should be done under illusion.

The thoughts of men are so much governed by words that there is no little danger, once a thing has been named, lest they cease thereafter to think of it.

* Another instance is seen in the great work done by Joan of Arc, the famous maid of Orleans, when she, a peasant girl of eighteen years of age, led the armies of France to the victories by which it was freed from English rule, inspired to her mission by the vision which she saw, and the commands which she heard, of St. Michael. Without doubt it was hallucination which she had in her rapture, an offset of the ecstasy of religious and patriotic feeling in which her whole nature was absorbed. Nevertheless the feeling and aim were not hallucination, nor was the mighty work which came of it.

Thus it has been that, having classed a phenomenon as madness, they have been prone to put it aside as if all had been said about it that need be said. In reality it were a proper inquiry to make whether a certain kind of madness is not the most fit instrument for the accomplishment of a particular work in the world at a particular time and place—whether the work would have got itself done at all, then or ever, but for the lead and force of that inspired rashness, without a certain divine impetuosity, as it were. So great is the weight of tradition, custom, habit, conformity, enveloping and penetrating the mental being, and pressing like an atmosphere on every thought and feeling, that the vast multitude of persons are unable even to conceive the notion of deviation; and the majority of the small minority who can be other-minded dare not, nor can so much as entertain a wish to, rebel against the established rule. What an originality is needed in any one for so small a thing as to dress out of the fashion! and what courage he must display in facing the questioning surprise, the silent disapproval, or the open ridicule and remonstrance, of all those who, because of his difference from them, regard him as eccentric or lunatic! All the while that which would be the height of eccentricity in one country is quite natural and customary in another. How inestimable, then, the service

rendered to mankind by the very few who can think, and, thinking, do differently from the herd! * A well-balanced brain, adjusted aptly to its surroundings in every aspect of it, so far as these are known, is plainly not the instrument to break up the medium and to make new surroundings, of an evolutional or revolutional character; for that purpose a brain is required which is not in well-balanced repose of faculties and circumstances, but which, being unstable, with a preponderating tension in one direction, is possessed with a sort of inspired or instinctive unrest, and is prone to discharge itself in the disruption of the old medium. It is the fit instrument which nature provides, where its productive energies are not exhausted, in order to prevent stagnation.

Happily the force of originality needed to break through traditional routine of thought, feeling, and conduct, and to give freedom of expansion to impulses of variation, is not, after all, really so great as it commonly seems and is thought to be; for the strength of the resistance looks much more formidable than it actually proves to be when it is put to the test, most part of it being convention and custom

* A truth which Prince Henry appeared to appreciate when he sarcastically complimented Poins thus: "Thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks: never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine." (*Second Part Henry IV.*, act ii. scene ii.)

with the vitality gone out of it, and a bold attack quickly discloses its weakness. Nothing is more certain than that things seemingly beyond hope are oftentimes achieved easily by being boldly ventured; and it is an ever-recurring wonder, though the wonder is that it should be a wonder, when the bold and forward person, with little wisdom and much conceit, who is not held back by diffidence or reflection, succeeds better in life by sheer force of pushing presumption than the wise man, who has self-knowledge and reflects, does by taking much thought. The real difficulty in putting forth a new principle is to disregard meditative doubts and paralyzing fears, and to dare the revolt in the beginning; for if the principle has vitality, it initiates a stream of change, which soon draws to itself a succession of reinforcing affluents, and flows with steadily gathering force. It is to make the initial start that a mind emancipated, even though it be by its natural defects of constitution, from the customary inhibitions of thought and feeling, has its special and excellent uses.

The foregoing considerations with respect to the origin and nature of visions and hallucinations make it plain that phenomena really morbid have uniformly been mistaken for supernatural appearances all the world over: so much lies beyond dispute. Furthermore, it is indisputable that temperaments prone

naturally to lapse into morbid action have been designedly selected, and means suited to induce morbid action of them systematically used, in order to obtain the visions. But to leap forthwith from that conclusion to the unqualified assertion that all visions of the supernatural everywhere have had a like physiological or pathological origin, and no higher origin, is to make a generalization which will not obtain instant acceptation. It will be earnestly and confidently protested that there are essential differences between the hallucination of mental disorder and the true supernatural vision of inspired seership. Who, then, will expound the differential characters?

With one voice the faithful followers of a particular creed repudiate the divine authority of the supernatural events of another theological creed; they despise and reject one another's visions, not because of any evidence of genuineness or falsity which they can discover and demonstrate in the features of the visions themselves, but because each disciple begins by tacitly begging the whole question in his favour, starting, as he does, with the implicit postulate that his revelation is the true one, and guarantees absolutely the truth of the supernatural visions which occur under its auspices. Thus the vision's veracity rests entirely upon the veracity of the revelation, although the fact does not hinder the vision from being quoted in turn as evidence

in proof of the revelation, that which is proved going to work reciprocally to prove that which proves it. The vital question really is, whether any vision bears a supernatural superscription on its face, and, if so, what the superscription is.

Those who have studied closely the nature and varieties of morbid hallucinations on the one hand, and on the other hand have made themselves acquainted with the elaborate descriptions of their supernatural experiences by those who have been canonized as saints and hold high places in the sacred calendar, have not been able to discover any discriminating features. For example, taking hallucinations of hearing, which are most common hallucinations among the insane, and comparing them with the divine voices or *locutions*, which are the least suspicious of the supernatural experiences that so many saints of ecclesiastical history testify to having had, it clearly appears that there is not a single feature in the one which has not its parallel in the other. No doubt the supposed divine locutions were often intellectual only, the words, though duly formed, being heard internally, as it were, as if they were somehow inspired into the understanding, not spoken actually to the ears; but that is not a mark of distinction, since it is equally true of many morbid hallucinations. The insane person does not always hear

the voices as distinct articulate utterances from without; he is careful sometimes, when questioned about them, to explain that there are in his head—interior voices, thoughts which he hears rather than words actually heard with his ears. Whether, however, they be heard as external utterances or as internal communications, they are distinctly apprehended and clearly understood, even when they come to him, as sometimes they appear to do, mysteriously from great distances; they oblige him to listen, seem to answer his thoughts before he himself conceives them, comment upon his conduct, instigate him, perhaps, to words or deeds that are odious to him, vex and embarrass him continually, and in the worst event drive him to despair and suicide, because of his inability to escape from their importunities, or of the fear that he may obey their injunctions. They want none of the characters which experts discover in their divine locutions.

It is difficult for the individual not to think of voices of the kind as in some sort supernatural, when he feels the ideas which they suggest or express to be quite contrary to the tenor of his true thoughts and feeling; to be forced into his mind against his will, and by no known laws of association; to play their repugnant parts there without consciousness on his part of the smallest co-operation in their doings; and

yet to appeal to him more distinctly and to possess him more intimately than ideas which he is conscious of having formed himself. Practically, he feels himself to be a divided, as he is a distracted, self; one part of him being possessed by a mysterious power which subtracts it from his real self, dominates it, and thrusts it into the operations of the latter with the sort of impish perversity and persistence of a demon in possession of him. What matters it that all the world differs from him, and that everybody he meets, learned or unlearned, is ready to assure him that it is impossible any external agency can do that which he thinks is done to him, when the subjective reality of the experience is so intense, so mysterious, so overpowering? Under the thrilling intensity of its coercive sway, the very impossibility of a natural explanation becomes a reason for impotent belief in that which subverts all the principles of the rational understanding. How prone a mind is to bewildering apprehension and preposterous belief, when it is so overwhelmed with external vastness as not to be able to settle itself in definite notional apprehensions, has been already pointed out; here is brought about a similar state of things by internal causes—by a mysterious experience-shattering and overwhelming condition of mind entailing a similar inability of it to fix itself in definite notional apprehensions. The actual

experience is, of course, strictly internal in both cases; it matters not, therefore, as regards the incapacitating feeling, in its character of result, whether its cause be mainly within or mainly from without; however produced, the mental bewilderment is much the same, and seeks refuge and, so to speak, solution of itself in similar supernatural causes. Having suffered a disruption of normal unity, the brain-functions settle into the equilibrium of a certain distracted morbid unity.

If we refer to the experience of St. Theresa, who justly holds the foremost place as an authority respecting the nature of divine locutions, we find that, although she lays down rules by which to distinguish between them and mere ideas of the understanding, not one of the rules serves to distinguish them from hallucinations. It is no mark of distinction that in divine locutions, as she says, the words are very distinctly formed, but not heard by the bodily ear; that they are much more clearly understood than they would be if so heard. Nor is it a mark of distinction that there is no escape from them; that it is not in the person's power to turn away his attention from them, as it is with locutions of his own mind; that he must listen whether he desires it or not. That they come with singular authority when not desired and when the understanding is occupied with other

things, and that they may not come when desired, whereas the locutions of the understanding come whenever we like—these, again, are not extraordinary characters, but characters which they have in common with ordinary hallucinations. Lastly, it is impossible to discover a discriminating quality in the fact that "these locutions proceed occasionally in such great majesty, that, without our recollecting who it is that utters them, they make us tremble if they be words of reproof, and die of love if words of love. They are also matters of which the memory has not the least recollection; and expressions so full are uttered so rapidly, that much time must have been spent in arranging them, if we formed them ourselves." *

If there be no objective mark in the supernatural communication itself to enable any one to distinguish it from hallucination, it is certainly not possible to accept the individual's intimate certitude as guarantee of its divine nature. To do that would be to admit the validity of every supernatural experience of the kind which any one in any country has ever believed himself to have; and it would not be possible to stop there, seeing that almost every person labouring under undoubted hallucination might claim a similar authority

* *The Prophetic Spirit in Relation to Wit and Madness*, p. 187, by the Rev. A. Clissold, M.A. He quotes fully from *The Life of St. Theresa, written by Herself*; translated from the Spanish by David Lewis.

for the intensity of his individual assurance. The latter we know to be deceived; the former we may justly suppose equally likely to be deceived, and far more likely, because more tempted by subtle interests, to deceive. It would be a subversion of the principles of reasoning on which knowledge is based to place any faith in individual testimony liable to two such powerful causes of fallacy, when it conflicted with the unfailing experience of all men of good sense with regard to a regular order of nature.

To the notorious objection that a direct communication from the Deity would be a violation of the laws of nature, it is no real answer that the divine locution might take place in conformity with a higher law than the known laws of nature, and be a temporary discontinuity, not really a violation of them —a special supersession of their function for the occasion; because a supernatural event occurring in nature, in direct opposition to its known order, would be the temporary abolition of the known properties of things, and the utter confounding of human experience—of that same experience which alone is our authority for believing human testimony; not the mere interruption or suspension of known law, but the negation of all law based upon the uniformity of experience within its range. The very basis of natural knowledge would be swept away in

that case; belief could never have the certainty that it was in conformity with experience, nor an instant's confidence as to what would come to pass next; it would be no matter thenceforth how many miracles, big or little, occurred, nor how often or how seldom they occurred: the universe would practically be a chaos, not a cosmos. If the law of gravitation can be suspended even for a second of time without the universe going to wreck, then it is clear that there is no law of gravitation at all.*

Were the theoretical arguments for supernatural communications of any worth, the communications themselves could not fail to seriously weaken them, seeing how uncertain, confused, contradictory, and sometimes ridiculous they are, and that they are invariably rejected by those who, not believing, need to be convinced, and invariably accepted by those who, believing, have no need to be convinced. Comparing, then, as Hume recommends, the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men with the instances of the violation of the laws of nature by supernatural

* To base an argument against the perpetual uniformity of nature within the range of human knowledge, and for miraculous interventions, on the plea that human will intervenes to control and guide and otherwise modify natural events, is to base it on an ignorance of what the actual conditions of will are, and on the assumption that it is free from all conditions, on a capacity to be satisfied with barren conceptions, and on an innocent willingness to be duped by words.

visions and voices, in order to judge which of them is least extraordinary and most likely to happen, we should have to admit that the veracity of the testimony in such case would be a more extraordinary and miraculous event than the event which it is adduced to establish.

CHAPTER IV.

MANIA AND DELUSION.

HAVING said so much concerning hallucination, its interpretation and its misinterpretations, there is no need to say much concerning the features of more positive mental disorder. If a person has an insane hallucination and, believing it not insane, suffers it to affect his thoughts and conduct, it is evident that his reason shares in the disorder; for if reason were not overruled and deluded, it might be expected to reason against it, if not to reason it away, and in any event to keep it sequestered in harmless isolation, as a sort of mental alien, instead of receiving it into its intimacy, naturalizing it there, and admitting it to full rights of mental citizenship.

It is not very easy to conceive now that the incoherent ravings of madness were ever thought to be the utterances of a god in possession of the man, but so it certainly was in olden times.* In the

* Οὐδεὶς ἔννους μαντεύεται, said Philo; *i.e.* No one prophesies who is in his right mind.

Hebrew and Greek languages, the same words were used to denote the ravings of insanity and the often equally unintelligible ravings of the diviner or revealer of divine things; so that it became necessary, in the course of time, to distinguish the mania which was the result of madness and proceeded from disease, from the mania which was the result of inspiration and proceeded from the gods or God. In both cases the individual was transported by a mysterious power into a mental state in which he became the organ of strange utterances; only it was perceived soon in some cases that the cause must be disease, whether devil-inflicted or not, the thoughts, feelings, words, and conduct of the individual being thoroughly insensate and destructive of all social order; while in the other cases, where the oracle was delivered in a more sober fashion and with greater mental composure, the notion of a supernatural cause preserved its credit for a long time, lost it very slowly, and has not even yet been entirely relinquished.*

* They were driven to distinguish alienation *of* reason, where the reason was disordered, from alienation *from* reason, where the reason was suspended and the individual spoke and acted in obedience to irresistible power. (See Clissold, *op. cit.*, p. 163.) The mad things done and said by the latter were in no way the result of his reason, and therefore he was not mad. If a man make supernatural claims among a people who see nothing extraordinary in such claims, never for a moment regarding them as hallucinations and madness, he is practically not mad then and there, although he might be very mad if he made them here and now.

It was no objection to the ravings of the inspired person that they were as unintelligible nonsense, to all outward seeming, as those of the madman. That was their sacred seal and privilege, the prophet or interpreter being the necessary complement of the utterer of divine oracles; his was the function to expound the meaning of the incoherent utterances which the God-struck person—the theoleptic—poured out under divine compulsion; he was always one who, like Daniel, "had understanding in all visions and dreams," and to whom they revealed their dark and sometimes awful meaning, as the mysterious writing on Belshazzar's wall revealed to Daniel Belshazzar's awful doom. To the one was given "divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues;" "for he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth." Greater, then, according to Paul, was he that prophesied (that is, expounded the dark oracles) than he who spake in tongues, since the Church received no edifying from the latter, except he were interpreted.* Moreover, the confusion would be so great, if many were assembled and all spake with tongues, that unlearned or unbelieving persons would of a certainty

* The meaning of the word "prophet" was not then, as now, one who predicted events to come, but one who interpreted and expounded mysterious ravings, dark oracles, unknown tongues, and the like unintelligible utterances of the God-possessed person.

believe appearances and say they were mad. Therefore it was most desirable that not more than two, or at most three, should speak in tongues—and that not together, but in turn—and that one should interpret. Manifestly there was not in the character of the incoherent and unintelligible utterance itself anything whatever by which ordinary people could distinguish it from the unintelligible incoherence of madness which it so much resembled: the extraordinary and specially gifted prophet was required to reveal its occult and holy meaning. Meanwhile the central difficulty was only moved, not removed; for no provision was made to guarantee the sincerity, competence, and infallibility of the prophet.

That was the state of belief at one time. But there was, perhaps, better reason than a superstitious belief in the divine inspiration of incoherent nonsense for the opinion that prophets were transported out of themselves by supernatural influx to utter what they could not have uttered out of their own natural resources: it was the impressive spectacle of the singular spontaneity and brilliant flow of ideas exhibited by a mind in the inflamed state of activity which is often the prelude of actual delirium or mania; when there is an upsurging into consciousness of the latent possessions of experience, and the person enchanted with this revelation of unsus-

pected wealth exults in a rapid succession of ideas, a vividness of memory, a freshness of feeling, a fertility of associations and combinations of ideas, and a facility of expression that seem to him almost miraculous; when all the subtle and complex inter-inhibitions that weigh usually upon his faculties seem to be removed, as if by some marvellous magic, and these revel in the intoxicated sense of an unexampled fulness and freedom of exercise.

A good illustration of this inflamed state of mind, happily called by him a state of mental ignition, has been recently furnished by Mr. Ruskin's description of his experience of a mental illness to which he succumbed, in consequence of overwork, as his physicians thought. He, however, was able, he believes, to appreciate the state of things much better than they did, and to distinguish what was definitely diseased in the brain-action from what was simply curative—had there been time enough—of the wounded nature in him: "namely, first, the precise and sharp distinction between the state of morbid inflammation of brain which gave rise to false visions, and the not morbid, however dangerous, states of more or less excited temper, and too much quickened thought, which gradually led up to the illness, accelerating in action during the eight or ten days preceding the actual giving-way of the brain; and yet, up to the

transitional moment of the first hallucination, entirely healthy, and, in the full sense of the word, 'sane;' just as the natural inflammation about a healing wound in flesh is sane, up to the transitional edge where its mass passes at a crisis into morbific, or even mortified, substance." This more or less inflamed, yet still perfectly healthy, condition of mental power, as he calls it, he found to be "a great additional force, enabling me to discern more clearly, and say more vividly, what for long years it had been in my heart to say." Such the ineffable joy of delivery! * Then he goes on to endeavour to make it clear that his writings and sayings and doings during this state had more method and consistency in their seeming incoherence than people thought, and were not so wanting in truth and soberness as they appeared to be, admitting, however, that some things had been said imprudently, and even incontinently, because he could not at the moment hold his tongue about what vexed or interested him, or returned soothingly to his memory. Repudiating the medical opinion that he went mad from overwork, he says, "I went mad

* "If in this world there is one misery having no relief it is the pressure on the heart from the *Incommunicable*. And if another sphinx should arise to propose another enigma to man, saying, 'What burden is that which only is insupportable by human fortitude?' I should answer at once, '*It is the burden of the Incommunicable.*'" (De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.*)

because nothing came of my work." It was the enduring calamity of not getting anybody to believe in what he wrote that was the humiliation which wrecked his mind for a time; that was the "wound" of which the mental ignition or irritation came that would have been curative had there been time.*

The distinction between the two states of pre-maniacal brilliancy and of positive maniacal disorder is not quite unknown to physicians, as Mr. Ruskin would have discovered had he referred to any medical treatise giving a description of the premonitory symptoms of an attack of mania, but the significance of the mental ignition of the first stage is not interpreted by them so favourably as he interprets it in his case. The state is not perfectly sane, nor is it salutary, any more than inflammation is as sane or salutary as he supposes. Always the best healing of a wound takes places without inflammation—by what Hunter called "first intention;" and the great aim of surgical treatment, and its eminent success at the present day, is, by excluding causes of irritation, to get healing without inflammation, or, if that cannot be done entirely, with the least inflammation possible; for the inflammation is not helpful and welcome, but hurtful and unwelcome, to quick and sound healing, being the exponent and effect of damaged structure

* *Fors Clavigera*, Second Series: "Letter the Fourth."

and incontinent function—of lowered life; a stage of the descent towards, and a less degree of, that which Mr. Ruskin calls "morbific, or even mortified, substance," and only welcome as falling short of the worse stage.

So likewise it is with the premonitory state of mental ignition: he whose mind is thus on fire, happy though he be in the glowing consciousness of marvellous clear insight, of brilliant flashes of thought, and of exalted powers of expression, is not by any means so sound and sensible as he imagines himself to be; one thing he lacks pretty completely, namely, sound appreciation and solid judgment; and one thing he cannot do, namely, hold himself in and hold his tongue. He cannot truly apprehend other things and selves in just relations to himself, and in their just proportions; he is full of self, and runs over in the exuberant expression of it, his exalted self-love reacting in such high delirious strain against its previous humiliations, real or imagined; and the estimate which he cherishes of the value of that which he then thinks and says, exaggerated as it is by the vivid intensity of personal feeling, is something of the same kind as that of the dreamer who is delighted with the great additional force enabling him to compose brilliant prose or poetry, but who is liable to discover his compositions, on awaking, if a line or

two of them chance to remain in his memory, to be no better than nonsense. The prudent aim of a wise physician who was summoned to advise in such case, mindful that fever of mind is no more healthy than fever of body, would be to abate the mental ignition by enjoining rest and quiet of mind in order to get sane and sober thought, just as his aim would be to subdue inflammation in order to get the wound healed.*

This intermediate state of mental exaltation between commonplace thought and actual raving, with its corresponding heat of feeling and enthusiasm of conduct, when it was manifest as a sort of prophetic fury, would naturally produce different effects in different minds—in the minds of believers the opinion of supernatural inspiration, and in the minds of unbelievers the opinion of madness. It is certain that Paul's discourse and manner before Festus, when he related the extraordinary story of his vision on the way to Damascus, and of his consequent conversion from persecutor to disciple, looked like madness, for Festus could not help exclaiming, as he listened to

* In the succeeding letter of *Fors Clavigera* to that in which he describes his illness, Mr. Ruskin informs the workmen of England that the essential difference between him and other political writers is "that I never say a word about a single thing that I don't know; while they never trouble themselves to know a single thing they talk about."

him, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." * Although Paul earnestly denied the imputation on that occasion, yet it was an imputation which his words on another occasion prove that he knew was current against him; for to the Corinthians he writes that if he is beside himself, it is in doing God's work. So that they had reason to glory in him either way—"For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." † Holiness or madness, that is, according to the standpoint of sympathy or antipathy from which it was contemplated by outsiders; for if all people had the same errors or delusions, however extreme these might be, nobody would be thought mistaken or mad.‡

There is a feature in Mr. Ruskin's case, as described by himself, which carries its special instruction—namely, his evident and natural reluctance fully to acknowledge to himself as insane those things in his thought and conduct which were not sane, and

* Acts xxvi. 24. † 2 Cor. v. 3.

‡ Even Christ was accused by his enemies, and suspected by his friends, of being mad, when he was drawing the multitude around him by his acts; for "when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark iii. 21). So again, with regard to his teaching, when a division arose among the Jews because of his words, "Many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of one that hath a devil" (John x. 20, 21).

his inclination to make his behaviour out to be more consistent and reasonable than it appeared to others. Now, this is a feature not uncommon after mental illness, and very notable after some forms thereof, especially after that intrinsic derangement which grows stealthily as a pathological development of character, and is much a growth of self-love or egoism, as distinguished from the extrinsic insanity, so to speak, which, not native to the character, falls upon the individual accidentally, as a foreign invader; and the persistence of a positive morbid hallucination or delusion after all the other delirious symptoms of the malady have disappeared, which is noticed in some cases of otherwise apparently pretty complete mental recovery, is but a more striking manifestation of the same tendency. Such are the natural infirmities of human nature that it seems impossible for wounded self-love to accept sincerely the humiliation of its entire overthrow; it strains instinctively to find redeeming excuses and explanations, or takes obstinate refuge in some entrenchment of the ruins, from which it refuses to be dislodged by evidence and argument.

It is the form of delusion that ensues as the climax of a morbid development of character, as an intrinsic evolution of the individual's nature rather than an extrinsic accident to it, which alone is

of special interest in relation to the subject of the present inquiry. In fact, we are concerned mainly with the mental deformities that are the outcomes of unfortunate growths of mind rather than with the derangements of the mental balance which are produced by actual disease. Naturally, therefore, the difficulty is sometimes to say whether it is madness or not that we are in face of.

There are two types of insane delusions, of quite contrary nature, characterizing the two leading classes of mental disorder, and corresponding to the two ordinary mental moods of depression and of exaltation to which every one is subject. In the one case, the afflicted person is in a state of abject fear and misery, full of vague apprehensions of evil to come, incapable of heart in his affairs or of hope of them, apathetic, inert, and despairing, and sure that he is, or is about to be, overwhelmed by some unspeakable calamity—perhaps it is that he is forsaken by God and given over to eternal damnation: this is, so to speak, the delirious climax of a natural mood of melancholy. In the other case, we are confronted with an individual who is in a state of mental elevation and exaggerated self-confidence, buoyant and busy, making light of difficulties, despising apprehensions, eager to plan and bold to execute the projects which he is prolific in forming, who, perhaps, growing in presumption, in

the end rises to the conviction that he is one of the great personages of the world: * this is, so to speak, the delirious climax of a natural mood of elated feeling and sanguine thought.

Notably there is a contrast of the same kind between the constitutions of different minds, which, according to their dominant tones respectively, are predisposed naturally to see things in a dark and despairing, or in a bright and hopeful, light; there is the gloomy and melancholy disposition which is easily moved to fears and apprehensions, and there is the bold and sanguine disposition which just as naturally takes confident and hopeful views. Now, it is curious and interesting to notice how these two contrary dispositions have given rise to two contrary forms, but equally absurd developments, of religious superstition. The gloomy and apprehensive mind, dreading all sorts of unknown evils from unknown agents, has had recourse to all sorts of supplications, observances, ceremonies, and sacrifices, in order to appease the invisible powers whom it feared; has implored and purchased the mediating help of those who pretended

* He who passionately believes himself to be wiser and better than all the world is very liable in the end to become the deluded monarch of a world of his own invention; more especially when he takes things in tragical earnest, and is entirely destitute of the saving power of looking at himself, in any degree, from the outside, and of gently satirizing himself, if need be, as an actor in the play who is not wholly its dupe. A sense of humour is a saving help in such case.

to direct converse and influence with them, and whose interest it was to magnify their terrors; and in its terrified credulity has been the easy victim of designing knavery. Here, then, we perceive a common and abiding, as it was probably an original, source of vulgar superstition. The sanguine and confident mind, on the other hand, indulging in high notions suiting its exalted mood and aspirations, and giving full range to its imagination, grows to a great height of presumption, and finally, when stirred to the requisite glow of excitement, to raptures and transports and ecstasies, which, being unaccountable and seeming quite beyond the reach of ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of the Deity, of whom the favoured individual thenceforth regards himself as the chosen oracle.* Here, then, we perceive the natural origin and growth of the enthusiastic fanatic who claims the authority of a direct divine inspiration, and, taking the lead in thought and action, commonly subjugates and dominates the anxious and self-distrusting temperament. In both cases we have to do with the exaggerated and abnormal outcomes of natural states—with superstition and fanaticism as the natural products of the morbid developments of different constitutional dispositions; and in the control and lead which fanati-

* Hume's Essay, *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm.*

cism takes of superstition, we have an exhibition of the same sort as is seen habitually in the affairs of daily life, where the sanguine usually leads the distrustful temperament, and optimism in the long run gets the better of pessimism. The propensity of human nature seems always to have been to run in one or other of these lines of superstitious folly—either into an abject prostration or into an ecstasy of conceit.

The melancholy form of delusion which characterizes one leading variety of insanity is not of special interest to us in the present connection. All the notice that we need take of it is to mark how frequently the imagination of a person overwhelmed with the vague and fearful feeling of indescribable misery flies to supernatural causes for its explanation. The delusion commonly developed out of the woe-saturated feeling by the sufferer is that he has been given over to the dominion of Satan and to eternal damnation by an offended God, either because of the manifold sins and iniquities of his past life, or because he has committed the one terrible and unpardonable sin. The very mystery of that one stupendous sin, its vague, vast, and unknown nature, has an awful fascination for his imagination, which is held by it in a sort of cataleptic horror. Indeed, he may sometimes fall, and remain for months, in a trance-like

state of stupor, in which he is almost insensible to surrounding things. Formerly such a one was taken seriously at his word, and believed to have received the divine assurance of damnation and the certitude of possession by the devil which he was convinced he had; but he is now on all hands, when prayers have been found unavailing, relegated to medical care and treatment. His interest is no longer spiritual, it is psychological. But it is not so with the contrary and exalted form of delusion, which still asserts its supernatural relations and maintains its spiritual credit. Its nature and operations, therefore, it will be interesting to consider.

It is obvious to any one who reflects, that a man must have a strong feeling of self in order to be a reformer, but it is the misfortune of this intense self-hood that, while it inspires the zeal and devotion which are essential qualities of the successful reformer, it tends in almost equal degree to prevent a large and just estimate of things in their true proportions and a proper subordination of self. Hence that which is a good to the individual by enabling him to promulgate and press new doctrine fearlessly in face of opposition, may become an evil by stimulating self-love and nurturing exaggerated or erroneous opinion into positive delusion. In itself no idea relating to external things is intense or strong, it is

only clear or obscure, distinct or indistinct; that which imparts to it intensity or strength is feeling or passion, the sources of which are distributed through the whole bodily self, the reason, like a guard or sentinel, being localized in the brain, to restrain, combine, regulate, and guide; and the passion proper to the occasion of a particular idea comes, therefore, from the affection of self, according as the affection is propitious or adverse to that self's native impulse to realize its own nature—to be. Now, a mental constitution which is so framed as to be able to realize itself adequately in one direction only, meeting, therefore, inevitably with frequent occasions of rebuff in other directions, is thrown back with passionate intensity on its one outlet of being, and so is prone to grow in that line of growth out of all just proportion or *ratio*—to become, that is to say, *irrational*.*

* If it be an aim to modify beneficially the development of such a temperament, that will not be done by opposing directly the main stream of its tendency, and endeavouring to elicit entirely new tendencies. It can only be done indirectly by diverting the main stream into many separate channels, which, though they debouch at last in the same place or near it, reach their ends in circuitous ways, and so tend to consolidate the character by organizing various relations along their courses; for each direct relation thus made has its relations, and and these, again, their relations, whereby the consolidating modification spreads through the whole mental fabric. The stream of tendency has its predestined issue, but meanwhile a character is consolidated around it. Plainly psychology can do nothing to direct and help education in any practical way, must remain a mere system of barren generalities and vague words for the practical teacher, until it

The pathological development of a character by inevitable and insensible degrees is the history of the stealthy growth of an undisciplined selfhood into a deformity that is virtually an insanity of mind: at the outset the sincerity and zeal of an earnest but not strongly balanced character; then a gradual exaltation of self by the unwholesome stimulus of popular admiration and the flattery of success; the inevitably waxing craving for stimulants more and more strong to sustain the waning excitement; the growing exaggeration of pretensions, in part consciously, but in greater part perhaps unconsciously, by subtle ways of self-flattery; finally, the loss of all sense of proportion and the development of an infatuated conceit of self. The sickly growth of selfhood in such persons is fostered by the forcing social atmosphere in which they live; for they forsake by degrees the wholesome company of their old friends, who, not agreeing with their pretensions, might check the growing self-delusion, and affect, by pathological affinity, the unwholesome company of like-minded admiring followers who feed it. This they do mainly because it is always more pleasant to increase, even if only pathologically, than to decrease, but partly also because the disbelief

becomes a positive and fruitful study of individual character—until, that is to say, it abandons empty abstractions and becomes *individual psychology*.

of friends, silent or expressed, stirs in their hearts secret feelings of self-distrust, which they are averse to face.

If we consider dispassionately the case of Mahomet, it seems repugnant to reason to think that throughout his career he was merely the cunning and clever impostor who deluded others without being in earnest as a believer in himself. Verily he had singularly small encouragement to begin the dangerous and difficult enterprise which he undertook, and had need and use of an almost unexampled constancy of conviction, steadfastness of resolution, and self-sacrificing devotion, who had to face the anger and alienation of his friends and relatives, to give up an honourable place in his tribe, and to hide as an outcast in caverns in order to save his menaced life. Mahomet was forty years old when the truth was first revealed to him, and in three years he had only gained thirteen followers! Now, as it is certain that any one is vastly comforted and his conviction immensely fortified the moment another person shares it, seeing that he may then hope confidently it is not mere madness—Mahomet's faith, when apt to falter and despair before universal disbelief, being sustained by the single supporting faith of his old wife, Kadijah—it is difficult to believe that pure imposture could have strength enough to bear triumphantly the stress to

which he was exposed. Surely here was a venture which it was not worth the while of the most sanguine and ambitious of impostors to begin, and hardly within his forces to carry through!

But if Mahomet's sincerity be vindicated, the vindication is inevitably made at the expense of his sanity; for the allegations that he ascended into heaven, as he said he did, that he was visited by angels, and that he wrote down the Koran exactly as it was dictated to him supernaturally, are too preposterous to be worthy of serious refutation by any person of sense at the present day. Certainly he had a new and great work to accomplish in the world, a quite new development of nature in its human domain to achieve, who was entrusted with the message which nature had at heart to be delivered at that time and in that place; thrilled, then, by an overwhelming inspiration, whose source and quality he could not apprehend definitely nor set forth expressly in words, he might well deem it supernatural, and his imagination, working under its supreme strain, naturally lay hold, more or less unconsciously or quite unconsciously, of every help, genuine or fictitious, which the incidental accompaniments of its glowing energy offered. He knew not himself how much he was impostor and how much saint; nature manifestly enjoying the irony of so mixing the proportions of good and bad in the

composition of the prophet as to leave it uncertain how far the best work of him is due to the worse element in him.*

A remarkable instance of one who posed solemnly, and is still accepted devoutly in some quarters, as an inspired prophet of God, is that of Emanuel Swedenborg, the founder of the Church of the New Jerusalem. The son of a singularly self-complacent and self-sufficient father—a Swedish bishop, who always managed sincerely to persuade himself that his own worldly interests were entirely other-worldly and identical with the will of God, and who was convinced he had on some occasions cured disease miraculously by his prayers—Swedenborg inherited in his nature a serene

* The persons who take leading parts in the great drama of human life seem, on the whole, to fall naturally into three principal classes: 1. Those who, believing seriously in its transcendent importance, take it in tragical earnest, and are ready to sacrifice strength and wealth and even life in its service: the mainly or wholly dupes. 2. Those who do not believe in it seriously at all, pretend only to take it in earnest, but are pleased and interested to play their parts in it as accomplished actors, and to make the most for themselves out of it in position, profit, and occupation: the mainly or wholly dupers. 3. The intermediate, mixed, and large class of persons, who, owing to the predominant note of self-love in their natures, are very much in earnest, and at the same time very successful in identifying the right with their feelings and wishes; whereby it does not fail often to happen that they sincerely persuade themselves that their motives justify the use of all means that gratify their wishes and—which for them is equivalent—further the righteous cause: they are the duped dupers; and of course they vary in characters according to the relative preponderance of the mixed elements in them, joining at their opposite poles classes 1 and 2.

and boundless self-sufficiency, and at the same time a certain mystical tendency. The first part of his life was devoted to the pursuit of science and philosophy, in both of which, labouring with great diligence and industry, he put forth the most high-reaching speculations and schemes of inventions with wonderful ingenuity and exhaustless self-confidence; but these pursuits he abandoned entirely during the latter part of his life, when, as he believed, his eyes were opened to discern what passed in the world of spirits, and he was chosen by God to unfold the spiritual sense of the Holy Scriptures.

It was during an extraordinary vision which he had when he was fifty-six years old, that the being whom he saw in the vision said unto him, "I am God, the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer of the world. I have chosen thee to unfold the spiritual sense of the Holy Scriptures. I will Myself dictate to thee what thou shalt write." The visitation was the forerunner of an attack of acute mania—so overwhelming the pressure of supernatural influx upon the mental equilibrium of the natural man—which lasted for a few weeks; on recovery from which he was what he remained for the rest of his life—either, as his disciples think, a holy seer endowed with the faculty of conversing with spirits and angels in heaven and hell, and in whom the Lord Jesus Christ made His second coming for the institution of

a new Church, described in the Revelation under the figure of the New Jerusalem; or, as those who are not disciples think, an interesting and harmless monomaniac, who, among many foolish sayings, said many wise and good things, attesting the wreck of a mind of large original endowment, intellectual and moral. Such the momentous difference of opinion possible, in an age esteeming itself the most enlightened age of the world, between two human beings of equal capacity and understanding, each as eager as the other to know the truth and believe it!

It is not surprising that the disciples of Swedenborg resent and indignantly protest against the complacent assurance with which his revelations from heaven are scouted as foolish hallucinations by those who accept devoutly as supernatural the like revelations of other founders and prophets of systems of religion. While the followers of one seer thus despise and reject the rival pretensions of another seer, what is he to do who looks for larger truth than is the private possession of any sect, but fall into a Gallio-like attitude of sceptical indifference? There meanwhile he can rest on the clear and indisputable certitudes—that illusive visions of the supernatural do occur, having features exactly resembling those of the genuine visions which it is not yet clear and indisputable do occur; that the evidence of them, whether

they are natural illusions or genuinely supernatural, rests alone, and can only rest, in each case on the personal consciousness and testimony of the individual who experiences them; and that there is no criterion by which the false vision can be distinguished infallibly from the real one, either by the individual or by others, the standard of common experience not being in the nature of the case available. They will take account also of the indisputable fact that hallucinations have occurred in all places and in all times; that everywhere and always they have been thought to be visions of supernatural beings and events; and that the visions that have been universally acknowledged to be supernatural in one age have been unanimously declared to be hallucinations in subsequent ages. It seems probable that a similar process of progressive disillusioning will continue to go on in the future, at any rate, for a long, long time to come.

Were a man to believe and do in one age what another believed and did amidst the admiring assent of his contemporaries in a former age, he would be esteemed and treated as mad. The religious ascetic of former times fled from the society of his kind to the mountains or the desert, living there on the coarsest and scantiest food, and mortifying his body with fastings, stripes, and exposure to extreme heat

or cold, all the while deeming himself, and deemed by others, a saint of the first magnitude: that was the truth of him then, whereas the truth of him now is that he had nursed and exaggerated selfhood into something near akin to madness. Reading the accounts which some of these holy fanatics give of their temptations and tribulations, the ingenuous student might be tempted to think that the devil had relinquished his other occupations, in order to employ his undistracted energies in desperate encounters with them; and it was naturally a great triumph for them to tell how completely they had foiled his arts and repelled his assaults. St. Athanasius relates that St. Anthony was whipped frequently by the devil, and St. Jerome says the same of St. Hilarius. Of Cornelia Juliana it is related seriously that, when a prodigious noise was heard in her room by the other nuns, it turned out that she was engaged in a conflict with the devil, whom, having thrown down, she trampled upon most unmercifully. The stories of the lives of the saints teem with similar supernatural experiences. Nothing comes out more remarkably in such combats with Satan, as also in the Faust-like compacts made with him in the Middle Ages for their souls by those who, having got the benefit of the bargain for their lives, cheated him at the last moment out of the price of it, than the weakness and fatuity with which so

strong and clever a person allows himself to be worsted: a circumstance not really to be wondered at by those who believe the devil engaged in each case to have been the particular creation, the outward mental projection, of the individual saint, who, rapt in a delirium of self-love, naturally depicted him and his overthrow after the fashion of his desires.

Not less grotesque and silly than the stories of diabolic assaults were the extravagant acts perpetrated by the saints who were strung to this high strain of holiness. St. Francis, the founder of the Order of Franciscans, stripped himself naked in proof of his innocence; following therein the example of the Prophet Isaiah, who stripped himself naked, and walked naked and barefoot for a time, under the influence of the prophetic spirit.* St. Macarius, having one day killed a gnat which had stung him, was seized with such compunction that, as an atonement, he threw his clothes away, and remained naked for six months in a marsh, exposed to the bites of insects. The last thirty years of the life of St. Simon, commonly called Stylites, were passed on the top of a column sixty feet high on a mountain some thirty or forty miles east of Antioch; there he performed his

* Isa. xx. 2. In like manner when the Spirit of God came upon Saul at Naioth, he stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night (1 Sam. xix. 24).

devotions, sometimes in an erect attitude, with his arms outstretched in the figure of a cross, but most often by repeated bendings of his body from the forehead to the feet, a curious spectator on one occasion counting as many as twelve hundred and forty-four repetitions, and then abandoning the count.* Such the lofty pedestal chosen for the display of his humility; such the solitude of place and spirit into which he withdrew in order to practise self-mortification; such his full-fed vanity aping humility, and all the more odious for that reason, as an ape looks the more deformed because of its being the caricature of man.†

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

† Long before the Christian era, holy men, aspiring to subdue and surmount the body, had exhausted the possibilities of similar asceticisms. When Alexander the Great crossed the Indus in the year B.C. 326, a strange spectacle was presented to him. "In the suburbs of the large towns, in the open plains, or in the woods which then covered so large a portion of the Punjaub, numbers of priestly devotees, wise and holy men, were to be seen silent and immovable, and apparently devoid of sensation, in various attitudes and conditions, sitting, lying, or standing in postures of great physical constraint or of positive suffering—some standing upright from morn till eve on their toes; or with uplifted arms bearing a heavy weight; or with perpetually clenched hands, so that the nails grew out through the palms; or with limbs so long kept immovable that the muscles became permanently rigid and unbendable. In the hot season some of these devotees sat between four fires, exposed to the full blaze of the torrid sunshine, when the naked foot of the Greeks could hardly bear contact with the glowing soil; and in the rainy season they equally sat naked, or else in dripping robes, enduring all extremes of the weather and season. These motionless human figures ate only at long intervals,

The ruling idea of the ascetic was the sure salvation of self, and the means which he adopted were exclusively directed to the safe attainment of that supreme end; he had no notion of sinking self and accomplishing his own salvation indirectly through the salvation of others by throwing his energies into the service of their welfare. In this respect he was a natural, morbid product of Christian doctrine and practice, a sort of monstrosity bred in its womb of subjective feeling and thought. For such a product is the outcome of the evil side of the doctrine which teaches the good Christian to make it his first and last aim in life to save his own soul for eternity by diligent and inquisitive introspection, in order watchfully to foster every holy and repress every unholy thought and feeling; carefully pruning this and propping that, like a good gardener in his garden, pulling up a weed here and planting a flower there, watering and tending everywhere. The inevitable effect of such a method of minute self-observation and self-tending, when carried to excess, is to produce an exaggerated sensibility and unwholesome growth of self, an extreme or actually morbid egoism issuing naturally in the ascetic and his fanatical extrava-

and very sparingly, living on the rudest kind of uncooked vegetable food." The quotation is from an article on "Pessimism and its Religions," in the *British Quarterly Review* for October, 1885.

gances. It must obviously be difficult in the best case to achieve a true self-renunciation by a method which, when misused in the least degree, leads inevitably to an exaggerated self-consciousness, and always must the injunction to surmount self by thinking continually of self seem to common sense a hard and inconsistent saying.

CHAPTER V.

NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL RELIGION.

THE principle common to the religions and morality of all ages and places, so far as we can apprehend the evidence, has been that of self-renunciation—self-suppression, obligatory or voluntary, for the good of the family and the community in the first instance, and afterwards the rise and expansion of this discipline of self, in ascending moral growth, to self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-renunciation. Rudimentary or complete, it is that which is the common element in the different systems of religion; that in them which, by a survival of the fittest, has continued to be; that which is the cement of social life where religion is wanting; that, therefore, which is destined probably to be the note of the ultimate system. Very different in this respect has it been with the theological systems of the different religious creeds that have prevailed, and so many of which are extinct:

there has been no agreement between the many and various notions which have been entertained concerning the shapes and doings of the invisible or supernatural; nor was agreement in the least possible, seeing that there was not a common method of inquiry and reasoning by which men might arrive at a common conclusion, nor any common standard by which to measure the value of the different conclusions actually reached. The revelation being of supernatural origin and authority in each case, it was the special gift or privilege of the particular people to whom it was made, the token or seal of its nationality; thus it became the inmost embodiment and strongest expression of national feeling in each case, and at the same time the channel through which the national antipathies and animosities found vent, itself in turn intensifying and strengthening them; and in the end that which theoretically ought to be the bond of peace and union between men of different nations, bringing them into unity of aspiration and life on the common ground of humanity, was an impassable wall of separation between them. It is notorious that there is no more complete dividing barrier between Christian and Moslem at the present day than their different religions, and how deeply the animosities of the different sects of the Christian religion have always separated and continue still to separate them, much

as they have in common beneath differences and little as their differences signify.

In essential meaning religion is the universal basis or cement of society, and that religion the best, therefore, which inspires and holds together the best social system in the most complete harmony of its parts, inspiring the units of it so to do those things which ought to be done, and to leave undone those things which ought not to be done towards one another, as to keep it in the best health—that is to say, most holy.* There are not many religions,

* Not that the social feeling is by any means the whole of that complex of notion and sentiment which people mean by religion. There is plainly also the notion and feeling of a power outside the individual and superior to him, demanding his obedience, and making for a larger end than he can comprehend—a power which he cannot but obey, suffering and failing where he does not, increasing and profiting where he does. This superior power has been variously conceived and named by different people in different ages and places, according to the measures of their intellectual and moral development; however it be named now—whether it be, as Comte maintains, the environment, physical and social, in which each one lives and moves and has his being; or whether it be thought of in the abstract form of the unity of an infinite spirit—it has supplied the pressure from above or without under which the development of social and moral feeling among men has taken place. Obviously, social union was necessary, in the first instance, to bare success in the struggle for existence against the powers without—in the struggle to be; and the inevitable effect of social action is to stimulate social feeling. Improvement of material condition goes along with increased knowledge of the order of nature and intelligent submission thereto—such is wisdom; improvement of social and moral condition, with the increase of social affections and good will among men—such is love. Whatever the theory, then, of the external power, the practical result as regards human

therefore, but there is one religion, differing in degree of development according to the lower or higher type of society—by which is meant, as we understand high and low, the more or less complicated social framework which it has to bind together. In order to effect this excellent unity it is essential to control and regulate, and to combine in collective social action, the self-regarding impulses of the individual, which else would become anti-social and destructive; for it is by virtue of this social nature in man, because he has learnt through the ages to control and utilize in social developments the egoistic forces of the individual, not by suppression of them, but by social combinations and altruistic transformations of their energies, that he has risen so high as he has done above the level of other carnivorous creatures, and is now extirpating, eating, or using them, instead of being extirpated, eaten, or used by them. What, then, is needed essentially in an organ of true religion? Not an anti-social monster of mystic or ascetic fanaticism, with more of the madman than of the saint in him, who nurses the development of an exaggerated

behaviour in relation to it is much the same—viz. obey the commandments of the Lord and love Jesus Christ whom He has sent; or, obey the order of nature and feel the solidarity of mankind. It is obvious that, in proportion as the feeling of solidarity has increased, so has the notion of a despotic power inspiring only fear and abject submission been permeated by the feelings and supplanted by the notion of a benevolent power inspiring affection and willing obedience.

selfhood by withdrawal from the salutary duties and disciplines of social life, but a being with common human sympathies, who disciplines self systematically by sincere and sober working for the good of the community in a wholesome reasonableness of life, checking undue self-consciousness, and eschewing singularities and other ostentations and distinctions of self, and so achieves the best development of his own nature by developing the altruistic and moral element of it in sane proportion and of sane quality. Thus the salutary sphere of religious activity for the individual is practical work among his kind; the just aim of moral development to surmount self by not thinking of self; the true school of that development the salvation of self through means of the salvation of others.* Moral and religious development is not a matter of speculative science—it is an end to be

* Sound religion, in fact, so far from requiring mortification of mind and body by gloom, sadness, remorse, fastings, penances, and other austerities of the kind, in order to propitiate and please a dread supernatural being, calls for the full and joyous development of all the functions, bodily and mental, of the individual, in order to help the natural being. True holiness is true healthiness, and that the best religion which fits the individual best for all his relations as a social being. To weaken the body by fasts and penances in order to develop religious insight and feeling, is to enervate intellect and feeling, and to dispose it to convulsive or delirious function. Is there a more miserable sinner against the dignity of manhood, a deeper-dyed pessimist, than the ascetic, who regards life as a crime for which he must continually do penance? He emasculates manliness and calls it saintliness.

gained only by practice; and the soundest morality is always that which is the least self-conscious.

The exaggerated egoism which takes not the inward direction of solitary mysticism, or asceticism, or sentimentalism, but the outward direction of passionate propagation of new doctrine with accompanying assault on old doctrine and practice, seems on the whole to be decidedly less demoralizing to the individual, and may be vastly more useful to the community, if the new thing chance to be a true development. But when such is its successful fortune, are we to suppose, because of its success, that it owed its inspiration and power to higher sources than natural? Is it a supernatural event to be helplessly wondered at? or is it a natural event to be diligently investigated and studied according to the positive methods of science? It may be allowed that in times past, when there was almost entire ignorance of natural causes, the invention of supernatural causes was legitimate and necessary; when kings governed by divine right prophets could not well claim less than divine inspiration; but in what light ought such inventions and pretensions to be viewed by an age which is occupied systematically in searching out the natural causes of events and in unfolding the mysteries of supernatural phenomena?

One reflection deserves to be well weighed in this

connection, namely, that for the most part the successes only of prophets have come down to us; the failures have passed into oblivion. We may be sure that for every prophet whose mission bore fruit there were many prophets whose missions came to abortive ends. Of them we hear nothing, and those who did hear of them at the time did not deem them worthy of serious notice, and certainly did not think them supernaturally inspired when they saw their failures. Then, as now in Eastern countries, the event was the test; success was the proof of divine inspiration, failure the proof that the inspiration was that of madness. "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? . . . If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken it."

It is notorious that most Protestants at the present day reject as unworthy of belief all alleged supernatural visions and miraculous works since apostolic times. Those testified to in Holy Scriptures they receive devoutly as genuine; all the rest they look upon as the offspring of deranged mental function or of imposture. On the other hand, a few sober Roman Catholic theologians excepted, most Catholics accept with reverence the instances of visions of angels which happened so abundantly from the middle of the fifth down to the fifteenth century, assign high

* Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

places of holiness to the saints whom they befell, and commend the studies of their lives to the faithful as edifying reading. It is the compendious abstract of supernatural experiences in all times: to the faithful they are divine; to the unbelieving they are imposture or hallucination. The miracles were not proof of doctrine, for it was admitted that false prophets might work them, as Jesus Christ forewarned His disciples would happen in the latter days when false prophets would arise and show great signs and wonders, insomuch as, if it were possible, to seduce the very elect. The doctrine it was which guaranteed the miracle, not the miracle the doctrine; and the test of the doctrine was its success—that is to say, its power to draw the belief of others, especially of the wiser and better sort among mankind. Home we come again, then, to the old and last resort of certitude—namely, the common assent of mankind, or of the competent by instruction and training among mankind.

If the part played by supernatural visions and miracles in the authorization and propagation of a faith was subsidiary to the doctrine, which alone guaranteed them, it follows that they may really be dropped out of account without injury to the essentials of the faith which they encumber with their help; not otherwise, in fact, than as those signs and wonders

that occurred in connection with abortive movements have fallen into entire oblivion or been discarded as illusions. Not so easily, certainly, because they have obtained a reflected credit from the successful movement of which they were incidental offsets. Being so intimately associated with the special stream of thought and feeling which has determined the course of human development through the ages in a particular direction, the ignorant multitude feel it impossible to part with them; they cling to the hallucinations as if to relinquish them would be to repudiate the movement; its genuineness compensates their unreality, and supplies in the minds of believers all the weight of bias necessary to subjugate reason and to compel belief. Nevertheless, it clearly appears that acknowledged hallucinations and visions deemed to be genuinely supernatural are upon the same level in respect of inherent authority, which is actually *nil;* the credit or discredit which they have being in both cases derivative.

What right have we to believe Nature under any sort of obligation to do her work by means of complete minds only? She may find an incomplete mind a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose. It is the work that is done and the quality in the worker by which it was done that is alone of moment; and it may be no great matter, from a cosmical

standpoint, if in other qualities of character he was singularly defective—if indeed he were hypocrite, adulterer, eccentric, or lunatic. As it has always been, so it must needs always be during the long time the world shall last, that the vice, and folly, and wrath, and madness of men alike work in service and praise of the Power which is praised and magnified also by sun and moon, by winds and storms, by plagues and famines, by wars and slaughter, by all living things and all that is done by them, whether good or ill, on the earth.* The history of human thought through the ages is in the main a history of a long series of successive illusions and disillusions; and what pre-eminence, except in length of days, has an illusion which dies at the end of a century over an illusion which dies with the individual?

* It is the deeply spiritual poet Wordsworth who says emphatically of war—

> "God's most perfect instrument,
> In working out a pure intent,
> Is man, arrayed for mutual slaughter;
> Yea, Carnage is God's daughter."

If, then, we acknowledge the divine inspiration of war, so by parity of just reason do we acknowledge the divine inspiration of madness. Pious persons who disquiet their minds with anxious and useless inquiries concerning what they call the mystery of evil, are really guilty of appalling impiety; against logic and against the positive authority of Scripture, they would have evil in the city which the Lord hath not done.

NOTE TO PAGE 202.

THE *stigmatics* are those entranced persons, commonly unmarried women, who, during their trances or ecstasies, are affected with bleedings from the palms of the hands, the forehead, and perhaps the side, in imitation of the wounds which Jesus Christ suffered on the cross. A notorious recent case was that of Louise Lateau, the Belgian stigmatic, who for a long time excited and attracted the reverential awe and gratified credulity of admiring believers. What became of her in the end I never heard or read. But there is a long and full account of a similar case in a Catholic magazine called the *Month* (October, 1885), entitled "A Modern Stigmatica."

Anne Catherine Emmerich was born at Flamske, a little hamlet in Westphalia, of poor and ignorant but pious parents, on September 8, 1774, and was baptized the same day. She was a wonderfully precocious child; "she seemed to realize the privileges to which baptism admitted her, and, leaning from the nurse's arm, she dipped her tiny hand into the holy-water font, in order to obtain its beneficial effects." In her second year "she began the practice of vocal prayer, when she could only lisp a few words, and it is not possible to say how soon her visions began, for as soon as she could speak plainly, the wonders revealed by infused light into her soul were made known to all around." "As soon as she opened a book she could read its contents, and the Latin prayers of the Mass and all the ceremonies of the Church were perfectly intelligible to her." Such and of such miraculous nature were the early accomplishments of the inspired baby. "No one, therefore, who professes even a rudimentary acquaintance with the Christian life, will be surprised to hear that the enemy of mankind was ruthless and determined in his attacks upon Anne Catherine." Frequently, for example, when she went to pray before a rustic crucifix which stood in the centre of the village, he appeared to her in the horrible and repulsive form of a dog-like creature with a huge head; and sometimes his attempts were directed against her life.

After the sacrament of her Confirmation, when in her eighteenth year, it was revealed to her that "in the sight of God she held the place of Holy Church, and she was to bear the same wounds, incur the same dangers, and undergo the same persecutions that menaced either the whole body or its individual members." But it was not until she

was twenty-eight years old that she attained the goal of her lifelong desires, and was admitted into a convent. There at first, and afterwards in a small room of a widow's house to which she was removed when the convent was suppressed, this "chosen servant of God" fell into ecstasies, in which she lay with blood flowing from the palms of the hands and from the soles of the feet, and from a "double cross which had appeared upon her breast, bleeding every Wednesday." "Soon after she had received the unspeakable privilege of bearing in her body the wounds of our Lord, she began to adapt herself to the form of a cross, and, whether sitting or lying, her feet involuntarily crossed one over the other as those of a crucifix, and the soles being pierced through, as well as the palms of her hands, the effort to move or to make use of them could not but cause her extreme pain." Her visions were of the most marvellous kind, the accounts of what she saw and went through in them evincing an amount and an accuracy of knowledge which, as the writer of the article says, is "utterly inexplicable, except on the hypothesis of a supernatural revelation." Not only the past history of the world, but its present and future history, "was unveiled to her prophetic gaze." Remarkable, too, was her power of recognizing relics, as soon as they were presented to her. On one occasion, for example, a relic was brought to her, sewn up in a little bag of red velvet; she saw instantly that it contained "a morsel of stuff that had touched the Saviour's crib, and also some splinters from the wood of the same." When the bag was opened, there was found in it just what she had described.

She died about half-past eight o'clock on the evening of the 9th of February, 1824, having, like many of the saints, foreseen her own death some time before it actually happened. "Her vicarious sufferings were carried on at an accelerated pace during the last months of her earthly career, as if, knowing she had but a brief period wherein to labour for others, she had desired to do the most she could in that time."

The story of these miraculous phenomena is told with entire faith by the writer of the article, who refuses to entertain the suspicion of the least fraud on the part of the stigmatics. Physicians may justly be more sceptical; for they are presented from time to time with similar unaccountable bleedings from different parts of the body by hysterical patients, which, if they take pains enough, they discover to have been artificially produced. Some years ago, a young woman who

had practised a fraud of the kind for some time with success, was detected in one of the London hospitals by means of a piece of tinfoil introduced secretly into the covering which was placed and secured with ostentatious care over the bleeding part. When the covering was removed, which had clearly not been disturbed meanwhile, there was the bleeding; but the tinfoil was found, on examination, to be perforated with a number of pinholes. There is not on record a single well-authenticated case, nor is there any sound argument, to justify the preposterous opinion, which has been broached by some quasi-scientific authors, that these stigmatic bleedings might be produced naturally by the exceeding and specific intensity of the imagination acting upon the particular areas affected. The supposition that the tinfoil was perforated by the intensity of the imagination would be scarcely less preposterous.

The stigmatics belong to the same class as the malingering hysterical person of the present day, who excites the curiosity and admiration of the country-side by professing to live without food, and who carries on the imposture so long as the atmosphere in which she lives is favourable to her pretensions. Such a person vibrates in response to the impressions to which she is subject; she imbibes the social atmosphere, and in her follies reflects the unwisdom, of those about her. The special interest of the story in the *Month* lies in this fact—that in this day and generation a number of educated people should be capable, by means of fit training, of so maiming and moulding their intellects as sincerely to think such frauds proofs of miraculous and divine agency, and to present the stories of them as edifying reading to the faithful.

PART III.

THE ATTAINMENT OF SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE BY DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

Section I.

ecstatic intuition.

Language being accounted a possession far exceeding the powers of human invention or manufacture, was, until lately, thought to be a ready-made faculty specially conferred on man by divine grace. It is true that other inventions which he had undoubtedly achieved by his own perfecting efforts through the ages—such, for example, as the discovery and uses of fire, the cultivation of wheat, the production of wine from the grape—were also believed at one time to have been obtained respectively by the favour of special gods, no people having believed otherwise in its early stages of development; therefore the opinion of a supernatural cause of natural things had been discarded in many cases, and discredited more and more in direct proportion to the decrease of the number of gods and to the increase of knowledge of natural causes. Nevertheless, that experience did not hinder

men from jealously keeping language in the sacred category of God-conferred endowments, and pronouncing it the high and special distinction of man which separated him immeasurably from all other living creatures.

As it was with language, and is still in some quarters, so has it been and still is in many quarters with regard to a certain class of ideas. Always since man began to think of the mysteries of his being—to ask, in self-conscious wonder, the why, whence, and whither of himself—he has had a suspicion or an actual conviction of a higher source of knowledge than sense and experience. Impatient of the slow and uncertain growth of natural knowledge and of its narrow bounds, and resenting the humility of its methods of tedious attainment, he has yearned for the completeness and certainty of a supernatural knowledge, and aspired after an intuitive and superior method of obtaining it; and his yearning aspirations have found vent and satisfaction in a variety of theories concerning a supernatural world, and in the exultant consecration of a high and special source of such supersensual knowledge.

The various means by which, in different ages and places, the supernatural has been diversely revealed to different people, may be grouped roughly into three principal classes: first, the visible appearance of the

god, or of his messenger or angel, who revealed directly to the favoured person, by visible signs or articulate voice, that which he was chosen to know, each people having its own god or gods, whose revelations answered the demands and fitted the measure of its intellectual growth and moral aspirations; secondly, a mysterious and overpowering possession, by the god, of the individual, who, thrown thereby into violent agitations of body and mind, or into trance-like unconsciousness of surrounding things, poured forth unconsciously, or in obedience to irresistible impulse, utterances that were sometimes quite incoherent and unintelligible, requiring a special interpreter or prophet to make known the meaning of them, sometimes sufficiently coherent to take their place, when written down, as holy scriptures;* thirdly, the exaltation of the individual into a spiritual ecstasy, during which, rapt from things of sense and transported out of himself into direct communion with God, he discerns reason-transcending

* "The Australian native doctor is alleged to obtain his initiation by visiting the world of spirits in a trance of two or three days' duration; the Khond priest authenticates his claim to office by remaining from one to fourteen days in a languid and dreamy state, caused by one of his souls being away in the divine presence; the Greenlander angekok's soul goes forth from his body to fetch his familiar demon; the Turanian sharman lies in lethargy while his soul departs to bring hidden wisdom from the land of spirits. The literature of more progressive races supplies similar accounts." See Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 439, who quotes a multitude of authorities.

truths of the spiritual world which are utterly inaccessible to his ordinary means of apprehension by sense and understanding.

Noticeable at once in the survey of these classes is a progressive development, in the shape of a progressive refinement, of the means of supernatural communication. There is a crudity in the two first methods of divine communion which suits not with the refinement of modern thought concerning it. With exceptions here and there among ignorant people in some unenlightened country or provincial district, the singularity of which only brings the general rule into stronger relief, any one seeing God or the angel of God would be thought a fit person to be placed under care and treatment as a lunatic, rather than a fit person to be canonized as a saint or reverenced as an inspired prophet. Nor is any one nowadays eager to discover a divine meaning in the incoherent utterances of delirium. Were it alleged anywhere, as it was solemnly testified in the age of miracles, that in a certain assembly on a certain day there was a strange sound as of a rushing mighty wind, the effect of which was that all those who were present were filled with a supernatural spirit, and began straightway to speak in unknown tongues as this Spirit gave them utterance, the universal opinion would be that which the unbelieving bystanders formed then—that these persons

were either drunk or mad.* It is the third method of divine inspiration, that of ecstatic intuition, which alone has vitality now among educated persons in civilized countries.

What, then, is the real nature of ecstatic intuition? Is it a clear and sure means of acquiring truths of the spiritual world, a genuinely divine illumination, and the means by which alone it is vouchsafed to man to learn them? At the outset, we have to take note of the fact that it is a state which is not peculiar to any one people, or to the disciples of any one religion. Brahmins and Mahometans, as well as Buddhists and Christians, indeed the votaries of all sorts and conditions of religion, have discovered and used the methods of inducing the abnormal state of the nervous system; all alike have perceived the necessity of abstracting the mind from the body, in order to enter into direct communion with God. The mode of the operation is in this wise: by intense and prolonged concentration of thought into one channel, the concentration being aided by fixing the gaze intently for some time on a particular spot—whether it be an external object such as a crucifix, or a particular part of the body such as the pit of the stomach—the suitably disposed mind is thrown eventually into an ecstasy in which sense and reason are suspended,

* "These men are filled with new wine" (Acts ii. 13).

conscious individuality lost in a transport which is felt as an absorption into the divine being, and ineffable truths revealed to the merged and enraptured soul, not by slow steps of discursive reason, but by immediate and instant intuition.*

Here we perceive plainly and may fitly note how great has been the progress of refinement in the means of supernatural intercourse; formerly it was thought that the god appeared visibly to the person and talked face to face with him, or that he took violent possession of his body, shaking it into convulsions and delirious ravings, which were the agitated utterances of his overwhelming inspiration; now it is only alleged that the mind rises during the ecstatic transport of the nervous system to such a state of exaltation and detachment, such an intense spiritualization of being, that a divine influx streams directly into it from on high, sanctifying and illuminating with celestial grace and light. It is not a state of definite thought or speech with God that is induced; it is a vague, diffusive state of blissful consciousness—the sweet fruition of God. However, the fundamental postulate is essentially the same in both cases: that certain extraordinary states of the nervous system, which cannot always be distinguished

* Usually the Brahmin devotee keeps on murmuring to himself or inaudibly pronouncing the mystical "Om," his mind concentrated the while on the deity, until at last even thinking is extinct, personal individuality lost, and the soul merged into the universal soul.

from morbid states, are the special occasions and conduits of a stream of divine influx into man. Whatever its inner essence, the spiritual ecstasy in which a person is carried *out of himself* by divine action, has all the outward and visible characters of the ecstasy in which he is *beside himself* through morbid action.

It results naturally from the employment of the method of ecstatic intuition by the votaries of diverse religions that the revelations differ as the religions differ. The reason-transcending truths obtained in that way are Christian truths when Christians operate, and quite different truths when a holy dervish or Brahmin throws himself into a similar state of inspired trance. And the same thing is true of its use by two Christians of different habits of thought and feeling: St. Theresa's visions of God, for example, do not agree with the visions which Swedenborg had of Him, being indeed in some respects, especially in respect of the Trinity, quite contradictory; and the pious Unitarian's intuition of God lacks necessarily the Godhead of Christ. It is, indeed, the misfortune of the method that it is inevitably vitiated by the subjectivity of the individual, and thus fails to yield uniform results when used by the followers of different religions and the differently thinking followers of the same religion; however pure the divine stream which flows into the medium, it does not flow out of him

clear and unpolluted: each subject of supernatural illumination projects into it, from within, his particular system of the supernatural. And there is no possibility of eliminating the personal channel of infection and of getting directly at the pure fountain of inspiration.

Plotinus, the eminent founder of the school, if not of the principles, of Neoplatonism, enjoys high credit and reputation as an authority on the method of ecstatic perception. He, perhaps, was the first in Europe definitely to formularize it as a means of knowing the infinite, which, as he maintained justly, reason never can know, since reason cannot go beyond the finite; it being clearly not possible for a finite person to know the infinite without the finite becoming infinite. The infinite can be known only, then, by transcending the limitations of personality—that is, by the separation of the soul from its individual consciousness and its absorption into the infinite intelligence from which it emanated; and the extraordinary faculty by which the soul has the singular fortune to be able thus to escape from its personality and to become identified temporarily with the infinite is *ecstasy*. This is not, like reason, a faculty of which the individual is always possessed; it is an occasional and passing state of mind, springing out of a strong enthusiasm—a sort of evanescent gleam of transcen-

dental rapture; and its true significance is a temporary escape of the soul from the thrall of the body, a brief period of union of the divine spark within man with its infinite source.* Very fortunate, too, it is that the soul does not fail, when it comes back to its personality or self, to remember, in its finite capacity, the infinite which it could not know in that capacity; else how could Plotinus ever have known, and been able to describe to others, the trial and success of his method? For that which he was unable to know as an individual, he was able, as an individual, to recount his knowledge of; notwithstanding the obvious difficulty of the natural man to comprehend how an experience which was only possible to him when his soul was separated from its consciousness, and he was infinite, could have been other than as good as non-existent to him as an experience, and as information to others, when he was again conscious and finite.

Of this unique and mysterious method of obtaining revelations of the infinite, by being at one time infinite and at another time finite, and of communicating, as finite to finite beings, experiences as infinite, it is necessary here only to say two things. First, the theory of it is plainly at bottom a more refined

* "Il n'y a qu'une chose nécessaire: posséder Dieu. . . . Il faut savoir se détacher de tout ce qu'on peut perdre, ne s'attacher absolument qu'à l'éternel et à l'absolu et savourer le reste comme un prêt, un usufruit." (*Henri Frédéric Amiel*, vol. i. p. 3.)

evolution of the savage's cruder opinion that in dreaming the spirit leaves the person's body, coming back to it when he awakes; not coming back to it at all when he dies, but flitting dismally in ghost-like disconsolateness about the scenes of its former joys and sorrows. Second, the method is uncertain and useless: uncertain, because the truth of its results rests entirely upon the authority of the individual, who may be misled himself, or may knowingly mislead; useless, because this possible vitiation renders it impossible ever to know when to depend upon it, seeing that there is no common measure by which to appraise its differing results in the hands of different persons. The perplexed inquirer is very much in the position of a belated traveller, who, about to cross some vast waste of unknown country, should appeal for assistance to a number of clamorous guides, not one of whom had ever set foot in the country, but each one of whom professed, by looking into a special magic crystal of his own, to be able to see and to trace clearly the right path through it. Although the traveller might feel pretty sure that one of the guides, no two of whom agreed, was seeing and speaking the truth, he would be quite uncertain which it was, and would certainly conclude it to be useless for him to take any notice of the contradictory revelations made to him.

Section II.

ECSTASY OF FEELING.

Large use was made of the method of direct communion with God by the early Christians. They were the enthusiastic devotees of it, and in their practice it reached a delirious rapture and high repute, though never, perhaps, so complete a development as among the Brahmins. It was the means by which faith found firm footing to transcend the limitations of the understanding, and to attain that strain of sublime exaltation in which it received and embraced blissfully truths which not only transcended but even contradicted reason. Tertullian's saying, "Credo quia impossible," was perhaps that faith's supreme flight, if indeed St. Theresa's saying, "The more it seems impossible, the more I believe it," were not a higher achievement.

In the threefold division of the Jewish temple into the *holy of holies*, the *sanctuary*, and the *court*, the Christians discerned the symbolical signification of a threefold division of the human mind and a threefold dignity of human knowledge: the *external senses* apprehending sensible things, which was the court; the *intellect* or *understanding* working on the materials

of sense to produce higher truths, which was the sanctuary; and the *heart*, or *conscience*, embracing things of faith, which was the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary, into which streamed the divine influx of love, and into which reason might not enter. Having discovered these significant similitudes of truth spiritual in a material temple, it was in accordance with the ingenuous habit of the human mind to believe that the ingenious similitudes were proof of the doctrine, which thenceforth had the guarantee of divine prefiguration; and, at any rate, no question could arise as to the existence of two distinct orders of truths—the knowledge of things without, obtained through observation of the senses and reflection; and the knowledge of things spiritual, obtained from within by an influx of divinity, and known, not by reason, but intuitively. The one was the means of becoming acquainted with the visible things of creation, the other the means of becoming acquainted with creation's invisible Creator.

St. Augustine has left on record in his *Confessions* an elaborate and instructive account of the long process of yearning thought and feeling through which he went while straining to attain to the knowledge and love of God. Passing from the knowledge of things obtained through the bodily senses, whither to reach the faculties of beasts, and thence to the reasoning

faculty, to which what is received from the senses is referred to be judged, as he said, and finding these all to be variable, his yearning and straining soul at last raised itself above its low understanding, withdrawing itself from things of sense and intellect, and reached by a sudden leap the knowledge of the unchangeable to be preferred to the changeable. "And thus," he continues, "with the faith of one trembling glance it arrived at THAT WHICH IS. And then I saw the invisible things understood by the things which are made. But I could not fix my gaze thereon; and, my infirmity being struck back, I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory thereof, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed upon."

By concentration of his mental energies on a particular tract of thought and feeling, and by the persistent maintenance of this strain of activity, he was able to raise it to such an exclusive pitch that contact or circuit with other thoughts and feelings was broken, and it freed for a time from their restraining hold; and the condition of quasi-cataleptic or quasi-delirious function thus engendered, was accompanied by an indescribable feeling of spiritual illumination and rapture. It was only, as he says, by passing beyond the power whereby he was united to the body

and the powers of his nature, to the very soul of which God is the life, as it quickeneth and giveth life to the body, that he could ascend to Him. But the difficulty naturally was to keep up this extraordinary state. For although the result of its induction was that "Thou admittest me to an affection, very unusual, in my inmost soul, which, if it were perfected in me, I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come," yet "through my miserable encumbrance, I sink down again into these lower things, and am swept back by custom and held back." If the passing of St. Augustine beyond the power whereby he was united to the body was the functional passing of a particular cerebral tract out of its concord and relations with other tracts of the mental fabric, and the suspension of their functions during its ultra-physiological exaltation, as many will be apt to think, we need not wonder at, nor need he have greatly regretted, the encumbrances of flesh whereby he was unable to keep up the extraordinary strain of activity, and was forced back into the custom of lower things.

What was the nature of the sweetness of the love of God which he tasted in the blissful moments of his soul's supreme rapture? It is well to set forth in his own words the description of a joy so ineffable. "But what do I love when I love Thee? Not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time, nor the

brightness of the light so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. None of these I love when I love my God; and yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement when I love my God, the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement, of my inner man: where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not. This it is which I love when I love my God." *

From the foregoing description it plainly appears that the sensation in which being is absorbed during the ecstatic orgasm of spiritual love is not precise and definite, not that of any one sense, but a vague, diffuse,

* *Confessions*, p. 204. In this passage we recognize the original source of several like raptures in prose and poetry. For example—

"It is no flaming lustre made of light;
No sweet concert or well-timed harmony;
Ambrosia for to feast the appetite,
Or flowery odour mixed with spicery;
No sweet embrace, nor pleasure bodily:
And yet it is a kind of inward feast,
A harmony that sounds within the breast;
An odour, light, embrace, in which the soul doth rest."

Giles Fletcher.

indefinite, and undefinable complex of all pleasant sensations, refined and sublimated to the utmost; not simple or special sense-pleasure, but a kind of supreme and complex sense-delight; not joy of feeling bound to conditions of time and space, but a rapture of delight melting away into a sort of infinite haze, a "sweet fruition of God." It is as if a much-straining individual could, by some fit expedient, kindle the internal organs of all his modes of sensory consciousness into a diffusive glow of blended activity, without the gross occasions of their natural external stimuli—without the light, or the sound, or the scent, or the clinging embracements of limbs—and lose himself incontinently in the haze of this delicious abstract and complex of all pleasant sensations: an extraordinarily induced orgasm of sense, obviously not to be kept up at best for more than a brief period, since to continue in it would be to become unconscious of it; to be enjoyed only as a flash of ecstatic rapture, at any rate, under the "miserable encumbrances" of the physiological conditions of life on earth. It will be seen, later on, that the induction of such a state of brain as expresses itself in this ecstasy of sense is possible, and that it goes along with a more or less complete suspension of all active bodily movements—with a sort of catalepsy of body. Not only are the lives of saints, as told by themselves and

attested by their admirers, rich in instances of the kind, but the records of mental pathology also abound in them.

The most ample and instructive evidence of the nature of the ecstatic transports, and of the actual visions which are apt to be engendered in them, is furnished by the life of St. Theresa, as recorded by herself. A child of highly imaginative nature, which she nourished by clandestine reading of the romances of chivalry so popular in Spain in her day, she formed a determined resolution, when she was eighteen years of age, after a mental struggle of three months' duration, "to bend her will to be a nun." In the convent to which she betook herself in pursuance of this aim, her health gave way under the strain: she was subject to frequent fainting fits, so that she was obliged at last to be taken home by her friends; the pain in her heart was just "as if it had been seized by sharp teeth," and "so great was the torment, that it was feared it might end in madness;" she could not eat anything whatever, could only drink; for four days she was insensible, and in such apparently hopeless state that a grave was prepared for her; her tongue was bitten to pieces, and her body bent together like a coil of rope; she could not stir arm, foot, hand, or head, could only move one finger of the right hand, and was moved by being carried from place to place

in a sheet.* After three years of this miserable state of illness, a gradual restoration to health took place, owing to the prayers of St. Joseph, for whom she had an especial love and veneration. Such was the beginning of the religious career of that most distinguished lady, who afterwards was the subject of those remarkable ecstatic visions which she has described with singular lucidity of thought and expression, and with such a display of practical sense as marked the daily work of her later life.

This is the clear and instructive account which she gives of the rapture or ecstatic trance: "The soul, while thus seeking after God, is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing and all the bodily strength fail it, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and, if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible—the very letters seem strange and cannot be distinguished—the letters, indeed, are visible, but as the understanding furnishes no help, all reading is impracticable, although

* Physicians at the present day, who are familiar with this sort of illness, describe it as hystero-epilepsy, and treat it accordingly; looking forward to a speedy cure of it when the patient can be taken away from her anxious and sympathetic friends—who, for the most part, increase it by their attentions and anxieties—and placed under suitable moral and medical care.

seriously attempted. The ear hears, but what is heard is not comprehended. The senses are of no use whatever, except to hinder the soul's fruition; and so they rather hurt it. It is useless to try to speak, because it is not possible to conceive a word; nor, if it were conceived, is there strength sufficient to utter it; for all bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases, to enable it better to have the fruition of its joy. . . . A rapture is absolutely irresistible. . . . It comes, in general, as a shock, quick and sharp, before you can collect your thoughts, or help yourself in any way, and you see and feel it as a cloud, or a strong eagle rising upwards and carrying you away on its wings." No ill effects followed the raptures when they were first experienced, but in the end they left her in pain over her whole body, as if her bones were out of joint; a kind of pain evidently very like that which hysterical and epileptic persons suffer after their fits.*

These raptures of St. Theresa exercised much the minds of her confessors and spiritual advisers, who were puzzled and divided in opinion concerning their real nature. The positive conclusion come to on one occasion, after formal conferences of five or six learned persons about her, was that she was deceived by

* *Life of St. Theresa*, by the author of *Devotions before and after Holy Communion.*

Satan; and the judicious advice given to her in consequence was to communicate less frequently, to try to distract herself, and to be less alone. Even those who thought the raptures to be the work of the Spirit of God in her did not fail to discern a marked sensual flavour in some of them; one of the wisest and kindest of her confessors recommending her two things in consequence—namely, to resist to the utmost of her power the sensible sweetness and delight she felt in her rapture, and to practise greater outward mortification and penance. Evidently the holy intensification of spiritual love in relation to the divine incarnation in individual human form did not always reach the perfect detachment and refinement of the purest spiritual communion with the divine when not incarnate; it resulted sometimes in an ecstasy or orgasm in which the saint felt herself received, like St. Catharine of Sienna, "as a veritable spouse into the bosom of her Saviour." Indeed, when treating of the mode of inducing these ecstasies by endeavouring "to imagine ourselves present with Christ and take delight in Him," she combats particularly, in one chapter of her life, the opinion of those spiritual writers who think no bodily object should intervene in wholly spiritual contemplation; that we ought so to abstain from all bodily imagination, in contemplation of the Divinity, as to put away the consideration of Christ's

humanity. This, she maintains, "is making the soul, as they say, to walk in the air; for it has nothing to rest on how full soever of God it may think itself to be. . . . We are not angels—we have a body; to seek to make ourselves angels while we are on the earth, and so much on the earth as I was, is an act of folly." Sagacious Theresa! ever wiser than her guides; she saw clearly that, however intensely and perseveringly any one may spiritualize thought and feeling, he cannot, while in the flesh, immaterialize them entirely.*

Later in life, when Theresa was at the head of a convent, and had to deal, as lady-abbess, with the troublesome ecstasies of hysterical nuns, she perceived plainly that they were not always of a divine character; and she protests against confounding the true divine inflation—the state in which the understanding ceases to act because God suspends it—with those devotional states of self-enforced rapture in which suffocating

* In which relation it is not without interest to note that St. Theresa's first attainment to the ecstasy of divine love, after long yearnings, doubts, strainings, and agonies of mind, was on the occasion of discovering and contemplating with rapt attention a very realistic picture of a martyred saint—I think it was St. Joseph—which had been hidden away somewhere in the convent. Whatever the explanation, it is certain that a nude or nearly nude figure writhing in physical suffering, or in the convulsive agony of death, and with blood flowing from its wounds, has a singularly stimulating effect upon those functions of the brain that are most apt, when they overpass physiological bounds, to transport it into ecstasy.

feelings and invasions of sensuality indicate delusion and the work of Satan. It was evident to her that there were really two states, easily to be confounded and not easily distinguishable, namely, a mystical and ecstatic rapture in which the human is absorbed into the divine, and an ecstatic suspension of mental faculties, in which the human is substituted for the divine, according as the spiritual sublimation was more or less complete. It is a distinction which other authorities on like spiritual seizures have been compelled, by observation of the gross lubricity sometimes displayed in them, to make; just as the authorities of earlier stages of spiritual evolution were compelled, by observation of facts, to draw a distinction between the mania which was the result of inspiration and the mania which was madness.* Then, as now, however,

* In various parts of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine's elaborate expositions of the inexpressible delights of heavenly love betray plainly their inspiration in the sensual delights of earthly love. Being a person of strong constitutional sensuality and African heat of temperament, who was much troubled throughout his life with the desires of the flesh, which he confessedly had not exhausted by the excesses of his youth before he devoted himself to a spiritual life, he evidently found it a very hard thing to rise completely above sense into the serene air of the pure regions of spirit. His descriptions of his feelings of ecstatic love have sometimes a nasty flavour of sensuality in them, which render them repugnant to a manly continence of thought and feeling, and not wholesome reading for young and chaste minds. In this respect they are not altogether unlike the *Confessions* of Rousseau, who carried morbid introspection of feeling to a similar unwholesome pitch; in fact, as some German author has remarked, "Rousseau makes his confessions to the public, Augustine to God."

they were without any common standard by which to distinguish the true from the false inspiration, the genuine from the counterfeit; the authorities of a particular sect not agreeing always in endorsing the raptures of its votaries as divine, but agreeing always in declaring the raptures of rival sects to be delusive and Satanic, and the individual who was the subject of them being by the nature of the case unable to adduce any evidence in support of his personal certitude.

Section III.

INTUITION OF THE HEART.

We rise at once into a more fresh and wholesome air when, leaving these regions of sublimated sensuality, we come to Pascal's account of the intuitive source of knowledge. He plainly and emphatically asserts that we know truth, not by reason only, but by the heart; it is by the heart that we know first principles, such as *space, time, motion, number;* and it is on such knowledge of the heart, as

Unfathomable are the possible contradictions and self-deceptions of human nature. How often is it unmanly incontinence which preaches ascetic continence! How often are the denunciation of vice and the exaltation of purity prompted at bottom by the attraction of impurity and the gratification of pruriency!

sure as that of reasoning, that reason must fundamentally base itself. Principles are felt, propositions are concluded; and it is as ridiculous for the reason to demand from the heart proof of its first principles in order to assent to them, as it would be ridiculous for the heart to demand from the reason a feeling of all the propositions which it demonstrates, in order to accept them. Thus it is with divine truths, which God alone can impart to the soul, and in the way that pleases Him best. He has willed that they enter the understanding from the heart, not the heart from the understanding, in order to humiliate that pride of reasoning which assumes to be the judge of what the heart chooses. Such truths it is necessary to love in order to know. This is the supernatural order, quite contrary to the order natural to him in natural things which God has established for man.

Those who seek God through nature or by metaphysical proofs of His existence, Pascal declares, cannot attain to a knowledge of Him. For if there be a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, seeing that, having neither extension, nor parts, nor limits, He has no relation to us; we are incapable, therefore, of knowing either what He is or that He is. He is a hidden God—*Deus absconditus*—far removed from human knowledge, who must be sought with the heart, and with the whole heart. Reason cannot

come to any conclusion in the matter. For the Christian to go to work to prove his faith in God would be proof of want of sense as well as want of faith: that he does not seek proof is proof that he does not want sense. There is nothing so consonant with reason as to disavow reason in matters of faith; nothing so contrary to reason as to disavow reason in things that are not matters of faith. Among the different religions that have been in the world in different places and at different times, not one has had more marks of truth than another to determine reason of necessity to incline to it. The reason cannot decide. But God reveals Himself in the Christian religion to the pure of heart, through Jesus Christ only, whom He has sent as Mediator; He requires of men no more than that they should love Him, and so know Him in loving. "Thus I stretch out my arms to my Redeemer, who, having been predicted during four thousand years, came to suffer and die for me on earth, at the time and in the circumstances predicted, and, by His grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united with Him." *

* *Pensées*, p. 111 (edition published by Garnier frères, Paris). In order to attain to the right mood of heart and mind for the reception of divine truth, it is necessary to follow the example of those who, once similarly benighted, have reached the light of faith. "Suivez la manière par ou ils ont commencé; c'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. Naturellement même çela vous fera croire et vous abêtira" (p. 72);

So far Pascal: whose doctrine is in the main adopted and followed by Cardinal Newman, in his subtle and elaborate exposition of the grounds of human certitude.* For the distinction set forth at length by the latter between *real* and *notional* assents corresponds with the distinction drawn by Pascal between the immediate feeling of first principles and the derivative conclusions of reason. But it may be doubted whether Pascal would have endorsed the logic or accepted the results of Dr. Newman's deductions from first principles; for while he scouted the notion of direct communion with God, seeing no means of arriving at a knowledge of the incomprehensible except through a mediator, Cardinal Newman manages to discover an image of God and a distinct apprehension of His attributes in the intuitions of conscience. The way, he says, by which we gain an image of God and give a real assent to the proposition that

i.e. in St. Paul's language, become a fool in order to become wise. Thus clearly and logically, as always, does Pascal see that only by resolutely and systematically *derationalizing* himself, and steadily cultivating a particular habit of feeling and thought, through suitable ceremonial acts, can man, who is a plastic organism, fashion himself into the incarnation of a particular faith, when reason, its instincts being nearly extinguished, will cease to disquiet him, and when, in accordance with a well-known law of mental development, he will feel pleasure in the exercise of his habit-formed structure. The narrator of the story of the *Stigmatica* (p. 259) proves plainly how successful a steadily pursued course of derationalization still is for its purpose.

* *Grammar of Assent.*

He exists, is by assuming as a first principle, as the foundation of all inquiry into the subject, that we have by nature a conscience—*i.e.* a sense of right and wrong and a magisterial dictate to do the right. That granted, all else will follow from it; for it implies, first, the recognition of a living object towards which it is directed. "Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons." If we feel responsibility, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible. And if the cause of this feeling does not belong to the visible world—which is the second implication, although Dr. Newman does not say so—the object to which it is directed must be supernatural and divine, and "thus the phenomena of conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the moral sense is the principle of ethics." *

Whatever the veracity of this argument, there can be no question of its splendid audacity. Considering its nature critically, however, by the help of Pascal's solid principles, if they and it have been rightly understood, some obvious difficulties obtrude themselves in the way of immediate assent. Let it be granted that the feeling of responsibility implies a

* *Grammar of Assent*, p. 110, 5th edit.

living object towards which it is directed, as no one is likely to deny, why may not that object be a living being or living beings belonging to the visible world? Why not other members of the one body of humanity? What right has Dr. Newman to slip quietly into his statement of the argument—insinuating it subtly as if it were part of it, when it is not an essential part of it at all, and as if it were an axiom needing no demonstration, when it is actually an assumption needing the fullest demonstration—the stupendous assertion that the living object does not belong to the visible world, and *must* be supernatural and divine, and to base on that shifty foundation his large superstructure of momentous conclusion? How, again, can the correlative of the feeling of personal responsibility possibly be a supernatural God, seeing that God, as Pascal rightly says, is infinitely incomprehensible and has not relation to us, having neither extension, nor parts, nor limits; that we are incapable of knowing either what He is or that He is; and that He reveals Himself to us only through Jesus Christ who, because He shared, as Mediator, the divine and human nature, was enabled, by virtue solely of His human nature in the visible world, to bring man into relation with God. Certainly it is not Pascal who endeavours, or believes it possible, to accomplish the singular feat of making the correlative of a human

feeling to be that with which human relations are not possible.*

However the case be as regards particular differences between these two eminent authorities on the highest spiritual matters, they are at one in this general truth, which is to be deemed indisputable—that the highest truths of Christian religion are to be known, and can only be known, by the heart; known as sensations are known, not by being apprehended, but by being felt. The sentiment of them may, perhaps, be compared to the complex of fine and subtile feelings which the inspired artist, or poet, or musician kindles in the heart and mind of the person whose natural sensibilities have been cultivated to respond fitly to the thrilling inspiration of his work.† For

* Because Pascal and Newman are great names in the religious world, and they are justly esteemed to be mighty pillars of religion, not one in a thousand of the religious people who join in loud laudation of their names ever seriously considers, even if he read, what these distinguished men have actually written. The sober truth is that the *Pensées* of the one and the *Grammar of Assent* of the other are two of the most profoundly sceptical books in the world. The most pessimistic sceptic may well feel a thorough sympathy in reading them. Were it not for the history of his life, the hostile suspicion might even suggest itself, not without some excuse, that Dr. Newman's book had been written in the subtlest irony, and with the most perfect *finesse*, with the insidious aim of discrediting human reason and faith.

† Speaking in the language of physics—and whatever the real nature of *psychics*, it is unquestionable that *physics* lie beneath them—we may say of a work of art that it is a product in which may be read—not certainly by him who runs—the subtile records of the fine and complex vibrations of a certain brain. In order to do that successfully,

here, as always, it is true that no one will feel or see beauty in the art who does not bring with him the faculty of seeing and feeling it: the Christian must fitly prepare his soul for the reception of divine truths, by weaning his affections from the things of earth and yielding his heart to the love of God, or he will never be able to know them. Feeling them vitally, he requires no argument to make him know them, and no argument, were it even uttered with the tongues of angels, will avail in the least to make him unknow them. And always he knoweth best who loveth best.

Here notice may be fitly taken of the interesting fact that the spiritual sacrifice of the heart to God is the refined evolution of the gross notion of the physical offering of the heart to the god in the human sacrifices of barbarous religions. Among the Aztecs, for example, as among other man-sacrificing peoples, the sacrificing pontiff laid open the victim's breast, tore out the heart, and offered it all bleeding and palpitating to the god in whose honour the sacrifice was.

the brain of the reader must obviously be capable of similar vibrations; its chords must respond like the strings of an aptly tuned instrument; if it lacks the potentialities of the more complex, intricate, and delicate vibrations, it is impossible he should perceive the signs of them in the work of art, any more than he should see certain colour-vibrations when he is colour-blind, or feel the pleasure of music when he cannot discriminate one note from another.

performed.* Although no virtue, but a revolting barbarity, is now seen in actual bodily sacrifice, the thoughts and feelings of civilized men having moved away from that low material level, yet we justly see in the gross offering of the organ which seemed to concentrate in itself the principle of the life and feeling of the individual the divine prefiguration of the spiritual offering up of his self as a living sacrifice to God, which is demanded of the Christian as the condition of the highest spiritual life;† for it is not to think in conformity with reason to think that what has been, and is, and is to be, can have taken place, is taking place, and will take place, otherwise than in accordance with a fixed order of development. Always has the present its obligations to the past, its duties to itself, and its responsibilities to the future, having

* "And here you will recognize that idea, so widely spread in the two Americas, and indeed almost everywhere among uncivilized peoples, that the heart is the epitome, so to speak, of the individual—his soul, in some sense—so that to appropriate his heart is to appropriate his whole being." (Réville's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 84.)

It is easy to understand that the effect of the horrid spectacle was to stimulate intensely the religious emotion of the onlooking crowds of worshippers: first, by the contagion of excitement in the crowd, and its increase to a blazing height through sympathy; second, by the strangely stimulating effect which the spectacle of blood and agony notably has sometimes upon organic passion.

† The Jews, like our Druidical forefathers, practised human sacrifices at one period of their history; and the apostle uses the obedience of Abraham, who was ready to offer up his only son Isaac, as an example of the obedience which the Christian ought to show in offering up himself spiritually.

a heritage to receive, to improve, and to transmit; it cannot therefore repudiate the past, nor cut itself off from the future in a world so ordered, however it might do in a chaos which some great anarch agitated aimlessly in frolic or in frenzy.

Is it true, then, and, if true, how far true, that divine truths are apprehended by the heart and with intuitive certainty? Not the definite *doctrines* or *dogmas* of the Christian religion certainly: they are as distinct matters of intellectual apprehension as any other propositions in regard of which the understanding assents or dissents; to call them experiences of feeling, or to allege that they are known through feeling, would be to confound all distinction between understanding and feeling. Moreover, it would be to deny the capacity of elementary feeling of the things of highest human concern to all those people—the large majority of the human race—who cannot instinctively feel their truth and beauty. In order that the divine truths of Christianity may kindle a consenting unison of feeling in the individual's heart, his mind must, as Pascal and Newman acknowledge and explain, be duly moulded and attuned by a fit training in the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures and in the canons and rites and offices of the Christian Church, which is the authorized, and, as they hold, the infallible interpreter of the ways of God to man; the reason

must be resolutely and perseveringly humiliated for the purpose of bringing it into a state in which, becoming foolish in order to be wise, it shall assent joyfully to truths that stultify it.

The differences which have prevailed, and prevail still, among Christians, respecting the essential tenets of their common creed, and the fierce persecutions with which the different sects in different times and places have pursued and afflicted one another because of their irreconcilable differences of doctrinal opinion, are ample proof that doctrines are not matter of pure intuitive feeling. The prodigious importance ascribed to the minutest shades of doctrinal difference, visible only to the nicest theological eye, is proof again how successfully man may so fashion himself artificially by special training as to sincerely think the veriest trifles to be things of such transcendent moment as to be worth dying for, and worth inflicting torture and death for. A common Christianity has never been inconsistent with an uncommonly fierce hostility between differently thinking Christians. The most frequent charge made by Protestants against the Roman Catholic Church is that it teaches, as matters of faith, a great number of theological doctrines which few can know and fewer understand; that it obliges every one to accept "as revealed truths all the Canons of the Councils and innumerable decisions of popes"

(Newman). Herein, of course, it moves on strictly logical lines; for the mode of training of thought and feeling necessary to fashion the disposition of mind enabling it to accept one truth which conflicts with or contradicts reason, or is the contrary of another truth which is also accepted, will suffice, when carried far enough, to enable it to accept joyfully any number of truths which conflict with reason or contradict one another; whereas to admit the right of private judgment in matters of supernatural revelation, where its principle is excluded at the outset, is to discard any standard of authority in the most difficult and momentous questions that concern mankind, and to lead inevitably to anarchy. That is exactly what has happened to Protestantism, as Catholics exult to point out; for, although all its sects profess to accept the supernatural authority of the Holy Scriptures, no two of them agree in their interpretation of them, while individual members of different sects, each of whom sees what is right in his own eyes, allow themselves every kind and degree of latitude in their expositions of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. The licence of interpretation has been the extinction of authority.

Matters have, indeed, been brought to such a pass by the dissolvent criticism of Protestant Christians that the anxious inquirer is compelled to ask, not

how much, but how little, of Christian doctrine is revealed by direct intuition. What is the precious residuum of faith which now and for ever is beyond the reach of criticism, and absolutely safe from the assaults of reason? Presumably there are two such certainties—the certainty of an intimate communion with and intuition of God, and the certainty of an eternal union with Him in a new life after death for those whose hearts are inspired with fervent love. It is this feeling of love which, when it reaches the right glow of transcendental rapture, is the inspiration of the heart that giveth intuitive knowledge to the understanding. Here, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the two revelations supposed to be made through it, since they plainly have not the same direct authority: first, the communion with God and the necessarily coincident intuition of His existence, which may be called the immediate experience of feeling; second, the certainty of an eternal life with Him hereafter, which obviously cannot be immediate experience of feeling and intuition therefrom, and which by no means is a necessary implication of that communion with God of which feeling has immediate experience. No finite being can have, while finite, an intuition of his own eternity; he may infer it, but at the best it is inference, not direct intuitive experience.

In respect of the direct intuition of God which loving hearts can attain, we are not left by those who practise it in nearly so secure a position of satisfied certitude as could be wished. For nowhere do we find more emphatic stress laid upon this method of communion with God, and more positive claim made for its absolute authority, than by spiritually minded Unitarians, who, having robbed the Triune Deity of that which Christians consider an essential part of His Godhead, and thus fearfully mutilated and blasphemed Him in Christian eyes, exhaust the capacities of emotional utterance and the resources of Christian feeling and language in writhing endeavours to express the inexpressible sweetness of the feeling of communion with Him, and the joy of the beatific vision of Him. Of whom? Of God the Father without God the Son; not of the Christian's Father and Son in one God. It is a God-enraptured Unitarian who enjoins upon us "to attain similitude and communion by loving self-abandonment;" to think of God "coalescing with our highest nature, to subdue and mould it all into sympathy with His own perfectness;" to "leave ourselves to the dear God who communes with us;" to "look into the loving eyes themselves of all that is good and holy;" and so on in like streams of emotional incontinence, and of effusive eloquence strained to its utmost ingenuities of expression to give vent to

ecstatic sentiments of the sweetness and joy of divine communion.*

When we are asked, however, to receive intuition of this strain and kind, not with sympathetic interest as the palpitating tremors of a sensitive individual soul, but with reverence as the blessed privilege of a superior nature and the sure foundation of the highest truth, we are certainly entitled to ask that those who enjoy and magnify it should not, while using the word "God" in a sense different from and irreconcilable with the Christian meaning of it appropriate the Christian's language and the hallowed associations stirred by it in pious minds, and tacitly imply that they are speaking of and adoring the same God. They are not; they are adoring an entirely different God, rightly or wrongly, to whom they have no right to apply the language and sentiments of the Christian's gospel. One has only to reflect with what consternation and scorn Pascal would have received such intuition of the incomprehensible, without parts and without relations, by a finite and relative being, in order to be penetrated with the sad conviction that the result of the employment of the method of absolute certainty, the method of divine intuition, by different minds, is to leave us in absolute uncertainty.

* *Hours of Thought*, Dr. Martineau

The second question for consideration is whether, granting the possibility of human communion with God through the loving heart, man has the right to make from that basis the inference of his own immortality. Does the experience really support the stupendous conclusion? For anything positive that it warrants one way or the other, it might be that the divine intimacy was granted to man for his help and solace under the burden of his life on earth, and that the opinion of its prolongation to him through all eternity was no more than the illusive hope and sublime utterance of individual egoism. No doubt many persons would find it hard or impossible to believe in God, and would not perhaps care to do so, if they had the complete certitude that there was no life after death for them or their kind; but that very feeling ought to awaken distrust of, rather than inspire confidence in, their belief of such eternal life. Not Job's cry, "Though He slay me (now), yet will I trust Him," but the cry, "Though He slay me for ever, yet will I trust Him," is the sublime utterance of supreme trust and love. That climax cannot be reached except under condition of the attainment of a state of complete self-annihilation of thought and feeling. Thus it comes to pass that man is only qualified to be immortal when, being depersonalized, extinct as a self, it is all one whatever the event.

Is it not evident, then, that the proof of individual immortality must be sought elsewhere than in the intuition of the individual heart? *

Having regard to the foregoing considerations, the least that can be said is that additional proof is wanted in order to establish on an incontestible basis the validity of the method of direct personal relation with the supernatual by divine intuition; that assuredly a great deal remains to be done to demonstrate the ecstatic sentiment of personal union with

* "A hard and self-enclosed mind is destitute of the feeling that looks most intently on the future, and makes it most credible, because most urgently needed by us. . . . God would never launch so frail a vessel on so stormy a sea, where the roll of every wave may wreck us, were it not designed to float at length on serener waters and beneath gentler skies. . . . But all this the heart of the selfish can never know. . . . Thus selfishness, like sensuality, secretly conscious of ignobility, and interpreting by its own experience the whole race of human kind, stifles within us the Eternal Hope."

It is curious that the spiritualist discovers proof of superior nature in what the cold and selfish materialist might consider to be the wail of egoism quailing before the prospect of its extinction, and therefore passionately urging to make most credible that which was most urgently needed. It is the more curious since it appears necessary to the spiritualist to get as far as possible away from human nature, in order to be able to believe in its noble destiny.

"The spectator who, in the dingy cellar of the city, under the oppression of a narrow dwelling, watching the last moments of some poor mendicant, finds incongruity and perplexity in the thought of the eternal state, would feel the difficulty vanish in an instant, were he transplanted to the mountain-top, where the plains and streams are beneath him, and the clouds are near him, and the untainted breeze of heaven sweeps by, and he stands alone with Nature and God." (*Endeavours after the Christian Life*, James Martineau.)

God to be more than illusive sentiment, before it can be acknowledged unreservedly that it is the way by which heaven is open to man on earth. The reserve is the more just, seeing that hitherto the exposition of man's relations with the supernatural has been the exposition of a succession of exploded illusions. The momentous question is whether the last surviving authoritative mode of communion therewith is trustworthy.

The validity of the method is certainly not self-evident, since it is a fairly disputable proposition whether, like so many supernatural experiences in the past, the outcome of it is really more than a projection of self into the not-self, and its deification there: the projection in this case, let it be noted well, not of an ordinary but of an ecstatic self—that is to say, of a self which, having been brought by fit means and training into a sort of delirious or convulsive intensity of indefinite thought and sentiment, creates an outward experience and being reflecting vaguely its extraordinary qualities. For as the god of the Greek testified of the Greek, and the Roman god of the Roman, and the crooked-kneed god of the South African testifies of its place of origin, and the gods of all people everywhere testify of them, so may it be expected naturally that the latest, highest, most abstract and refined intercourse with the Divine

would, were it also of human creation, testify of the state and character of the intense spiritualization which was the basis of the ecstatic rapture: if illusion, like every illusion of the kind, it will not fail to reflect the state of thought and feeling of the subject. The finite can confessedly express itself in respect of the infinite by terms only which are negations of definite conceptions: suffuse these negations with the vague and hazy emotions which a conscious part feels in relation to an incomprehensible whole; is the subjective state then produced one which, if projected into outward being in accordance with the well-known habit of the human mind, would take the character of divine being and divine communion? Is it a strained subjective experience transformed into objective being; in other words, the objectivation of a *psycholepsy*?

Section IV.

THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF ECSTATIC INTUITION.

How is any one to feel sure, even the individual himself who undergoes the supernatural experience, that the supernatural element in it is objective reality, not subjective illusion? How can he safely tell how much of it is verity and how much of it vanity? He, no doubt, does feel sure of it; the beatific feeling

is absolute and overwhelming proof to him; it supersedes and transcends all the processes of reason by which he ordinarily examines the nature of a belief and convinces himself of its truth; it pervades him authoritatively with the thrilling intensity of an intuitive certainty. The strongest proofs of reason would add nothing to the certitude; the strongest disproof of reason can take nothing from it. Nevertheless, he may be deceived; in his most ecstatic rapture he is still human, and it is human to err. That is the one certainty in the uncertain business.

He cannot with the least justice demand from others, who with great justice may demand credentials from him, an equal, absolute, and unwavering faith in the intuition of his ecstatic feeling. Nor can he justly complain of their reserve in this respect; for he who professes to be able, while still in the flesh, to enter into coalescence with God, sets up pretensions of so large and extraordinary a nature that he must be mad himself if he does not see that he cannot challenge assent to them on the basis of his mere personal credit; who, moreover, in no other matter is so far distinguished above his fellows as to be free from human temptation to deceive and from human liability to error. Granted that there are a thousand persons ready to come forward and to declare with one consent that they have had similar experiences, not

perhaps themselves reflecting sufficiently how very dissimilar the alleged similars actually were, the cumulative voice is not cumulative proof in such case; the multiplication of witnesses, even when they agree, adds nothing whatever to the strength of the evidence so long as they all hang to the same weak link: a chain, however much lengthened by a multitude of links, is not stronger than the weakest link, and the weak or wanting link in the present case is the proof of the chain's attachment to the supernatural. If, on the one hand, the reality of the connection be in the nature of the case unprovable, as it certainly is, a great deal is done, on the other hand, in question or disproof of it, if it be shown that the extraordinary experience which is deemed supernatural does not really lie outside the natural laws of physiological function, but is entirely explicable in accordance with them. In that case, the assumption of supernatural intervention is entirely superfluous and gratuitous; it is the invocation of an unknown cause to make a mysterious show of doing that which a known cause is ready at hand to do simply.

When a searching inquiry is made into the mental constitutions of those who are most sure of their faculty of supernatural intuition, and exult most in the possession of it, good reasons present themselves to justify a suspension of assent at least. For the

most part, they are not persons whose sagacity of insight, strength of character, and solidity of judgment one would trust in important matters of worldly concern, from which, indeed, their tastes and occupations commonly cut them off. They think it no disparagement, but a proof of superiority of nature, to boast that the facts of the spiritual world are more real to them than the facts of the natural world; and they indulge a natural self-gratulation on their possession of a finer spiritual sense and of a nobler morality than those are capable of who cannot attain to such supernatural illuminations as they enjoy. Two serious dangers to character, which they overlook, are thence inevitable: first, that in straining after facts of the spiritual world they may, after all, be straining after the unreal to the neglect of the real, and thus be making themselves artificial and unwholesome beings; second, that their conceit of a superior moral nature, being founded on a thin and shrill egotism, may develop into Pharisaism, and, all unawares to themselves, render them self-deceivers and innocent impostors. From their standpoint the matter appears in one light; but it may well appear in a different light to the impartial observer who studies them and their lives dispassionately from the outside simply as facts to be examined and taken account of, like other natural facts, in the formation of a scientific induction.

What induction do their lives actually warrant in respect of superior sense and superior morality?

He who frankly undertakes that research in a complete and critical way will not fail to note in many instances that those who lay claim to select periods of ecstatic coalescence with the Deity have what physicians recognize and describe as the neurotic temperament, and those who claim to have them with most intensity have that temperament in its most intense degree.* Thereby they are predisposed naturally to states of extreme nervous exaltation, which translate themselves into corresponding affections of consciousness—into extreme, irregular, and even perverted sensibilities, and into similar exaltations and perversions of sentiment and thought, before they undergo that spiritual new birth or conversion by which they enter into communion with the Divine; and into sublimated states of spiritual ecstasy, after they have undergone the transformation from spiritual death into spiritual life. The long and severe illness which St. Theresa had at the beginning of her religious career, when her body was contorted into a helpless bundle of pains and spasms, may have been a tremendous commotion of the nerves antecedent to or

* A tendency of which is to spasmodic or convulsive action of mind or body. I have described and discussed it elsewhere as the *neurosis spasmodica*. (*Pathology of Mind*, p. 188.)

accompanying the opening of supernatural vision in her; but it certainly was exactly such a commotion of nerves in a neurotic temperament at a particularly susceptible period of life as is frequently met with and dealt with in young women by physicians at the present day, without being followed by the opening of supernatural vision in the patient. Is the neurotic temperament of the physician's classification, then, identical with the spiritually disposed temperament of the theologian's classification? and the ultraphysiological or positively pathological outcome of it in ecstatic function no more spiritual and no less material in the one case than in the other?

There is no doubt that so-called swoons, or trances, or cataleptic seizures, befall from time to time persons of a susceptible nervous temperament, especially during the active period of the reproductive functions; that such seizures are more easily provoked when the way of them has been made easy by frequent repetitions, so much so that they may then take place at any moment and on the least occasion; that they are attended with a strain of exalted feeling and thought which follows the line of the special habit of feeling and thought most nurtured by the individual before their occurrence, whether this has been more of a spiritually or of a materially erotic character; that, under the delirious strain of feeling,

the natural consciousness of time and space is much modified, and sometimes apparently abolished; and that all the outward and visible features of these attacks resemble exactly those of the nervous seizures which were supposed at one time to betray the advent and possession of the god, and which are still thought in some quarters to be the special means and occasions of divine communion.

It will suffice here merely to refer to the varieties of these remarkable seizures—ecstatic, cataleptic, hysteric, hystero-epileptic, and, when induced artificially, hypnotic, or mesmeric—without going into particulars. They will be found described at length in their proper places in medical treatises on nervous and mental pathology. Their general features are faint, incomplete, or almost extinguished consciousness of surroundings; absorption of mind in some strain of purely internal activity, with corresponding strain of vague delirious feeling; insusceptibility, partial or complete, to external impressions; more or less complete abeyance of movement, the muscles of the body or of a part of it being relaxed, or in rigid contractions, or in convulsions; acceleration in many cases, but in some cases marked lowering, of the organic functions of respiration and circulation, which in extreme cases are almost suspended.*

* It is in connexion with such states that the so-called miraculous *stigmata* appear sometimes. (See note at the end of Part II.)

For the time being there is a withdrawal of the individual, entirely as a conscious and in large measure as an active living element of nature, from his external life of relation; he is, as it were, detached from and dead to the world—whether he is in the body or out of the body he knows not; but he is not dead wholly, seeing that his organic functions go on at a lowered rate of activity, and that his consciousness is absorbed in a purely internal strain of activity—in a special ecstasy.

Naturally, when he comes to himself, he is quite unable to give an account, in the terms of the language of ordinary experience, of the singular state of abnormal consciousness in which he was during his ecstasy. It was a state comparable to nothing in ordinary experience, and indescribable; therefore, in terms of such experience; not capable of being really recalled to memory when he has returned to his life of relation, since to recall it exactly as it was would be to repeat it; impossible to be spoken of, except vaguely in terms of negation, as something indefinite, inexplicable, infinite, incomprehensible, ineffable. It stands out from his normal mental life, just as a convulsion stands out from his normal bodily life. No wonder, then, that he thinks supernatural, or thinks of in such dimly obscure way, that which seems so much outside the range of natural experience and beyond the compass

of real apprehension, and which puts him, for the time being, so much out of himself. No wonder, too, that he is tempted to see in its rapture a sweet prelibation of the abolition of self and final absorption into the infinite, which is the supreme goal of these convulsive endeavours after a spiritual life. But what will become of consciousness in the end, when they have attained their crown and consummation? Must the consciousness appertaining to the final absorption be a consciousness expanded, attenuated, and sublimated into absolute unconsciousness?

These ecstasies of thought and feeling are easily provoked in those persons who are susceptible by natural temperament and who have increased their natural susceptibility by practice; for in this case, as in other cases, the nervous functions fall easily into the habits of their exercise, and very easily into habits of irregular exercise in neurotic temperaments, where their innate tendencies are that way. In olden times, when the mind was regarded as a simple, uncompounded spiritual unity, acting always as a whole in every function of it, such extraordinary states, in which it seemed to be disintegrate, could not well be conceived otherwise than as owing to some supernatural influence which had taken possession of it, and was constraining it to displays of function more than natural; but now that the mental functions are

known to be inseparably connected with their nervous substrata, and that these are disposed and united in the brain in the most orderly fashion—superordinate, co-ordinate, and subordinate—forming in the sum a complex aggregate or confederation of nerve-junctions and nerve-tracts, each of which is capable of more or less independent action, it is probable that the extraordinary states of apparent mental disintegration are owing to the separate and irregular function of certain mental nerve-tracts or combinations of nerve-tracts, and to the coincident suspension of the functions of all the rest—a sort of blocking of all junctions during its express activity. The supernatural powers which were thought to possess and constrain the mind are in that case plainly no more than its natural nervous substrata engaged in disordinate, abnormal, or, so to speak, *un*natural function. Thus it comes to pass that the strange nervous seizures with their peculiar mental concomitants, instead of being outside the range of positive research, are most interesting events within it; they are useful natural experiments which throw light upon the intricate functions of the most complex organ in the world—the human brain. The painstaking researches of pathology tend steadily to supersede an awestricken and impotent admiration of the supernatural in this its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that in the extremest ecstasies there

is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of possession of the individual by an external power. What there truly is is a *psycholepsy*.*

The dissolution of mental unity, owing to the separate and irregular action of one or more of the numerous and diverse nerve-centres or nerve-tracts which make up the complex unity of the brain, has more than a purely pathological interest. In the first place, such disordinate function is often the outcome of an innate tendency that way, which is the individual's evil heritage from a line of ancestral development wanting in solidarity and thorough wholesomeness of character. Secondly, the physiological outcome of such want of solidarity, when well marked, is a lack of wholesome unity and veracity of nature in the individual, who is never thoroughly at one with himself or in sincere and consistent relations with other

* A term which one may, perhaps, propose for use as fairly denominating a class of phenomena which call for further and more exact investigation. Several varieties might be formulated and described. For example—

I. Psycholepsy:
- (*a*) Theological illumination or ecstasy.
- (*b*) Metaphysical intuition or ecstasy.
- (*c*) Catalepsy and its allied trances.
- (*d*) Fanatical transport of enthusiasm or of fury.
- (*e*) Frenzy of epidemic emotion.
- (*f*) Fascination of fear.
- (*g*) Ecstasy of gross brain-disease.

persons and things. He is impressionable, mobile, fluctuating, inconstant in thought and feeling. Abandoned to the current of thought and feeling of the moment, to which he gives perhaps effusive expression, he produces an impression of genuineness and sincerity of feeling which is not proportionately justified in the issue; for when the stream of activity has subsided, and been replaced by a stream of thought and feeling of another kind, to which he is equally abandoned for the time, he is just as earnest and effusive about it, although it be of an almost contrary character, as he was about the other which he now cannot sufficiently realize that he ever felt. Each current reaching such an intemperate, if not distempered, intensity as to be out of proportion or tempered relation with the rest of the mental functions, it is impossible for it to be recalled adequately even when the mind is comparatively quiet, much more when it is engaged in an activity of an opposite kind. There is an inevitable lack of sincerity, solidity, and unity of character. The person cannot trust himself, since he is never quite sure what is himself, and he is accordingly equally suspicious and distrustful of others, who in turn must necessarily fail, if constant and veracious themselves, to stay in definite relations with one so mobile and inconstant. His suspicion and guile are a sort of natural protection, as they are

a natural consequence, of his constitutional infirmity of mental structure.

There is this further consequence of his transient intensities of feeling: that, being so extremely vivid, they are quite as real to him when they have not adequate objective causes as they are when they are truly motived in external impressions; he cannot therefore distinguish between imagination and fact. That which he has vividly thought and felt is fact for him; the more intense *his* experience, the more sure he is of *its* reality. Moreover, as each train of thought and mood of feeling naturally selects and assimilates the impressions which are agreeable to its increase, and turns away from those which are not, he easily sees reasons for his belief and sees not the reasons against it, and is capable of the most inconsistent conduct, according to the train of thought and feeling in the ascendant, without being aware of the inconsistency. The one consistent thing is the unconscious self beneath the inconsistent manifestations of consciousness; what that is the history of his life teaches best.

This sort of loose mental temperament—really unsound or insane temperament in so far as it lacks unity of being and sense of proportion—is, on the one hand, as already mentioned, a result of insanity or allied disorder in the family, and, on the other

hand, a temperament eminently favourable to the generation of insanity in offspring. The nature of the function which it displays betrays the defective nature of the mental constitution, for it is the giving out in express work of that which is embodied implicitly in structure. Moreover, as structuralization has followed the lines of function in the order of organic development, it is sure proof of bad antecedent exercise and development some time or other in the ancestral line.

Two principles may be laid down as perfectly legitimate principles of inference—first, *that of inference from the character of the function to the character of the organ or structure;* second, *that of inference from the kind of function displayed by the structure to the sort of function which prevailed or, as it were, presided during its development.* An ill-constructed machine means ill conceiving in the making of it and ill doing in the function of it; and this is a truth which is just as applicable to the human brain, where the working power is from within, as it is to a mechanical invention which is made from without. The individual brain is virtually the consolidate embodiment of a long series of memories; wherefore everybody, in the main lines of his thoughts, feelings, and conduct, really recalls the experiences of his forefathers. Consciousness tells him, indeed, that he is a

self-sufficing individual with infinite potentialities of free-will; it tells him also that the sun goes round the earth.

Section V.

THEOLOGICAL ILLUMINATION.

Passing from nervous seizures the morbid nature of which is generally acknowledged, and from the lessons which they teach, it remains only to consider the nature and weigh the value of the latest, best-attested, and least-questioned mode of communion with the supernatural—that is, the immediate intuition of God through love of Him. At once the difficulty arises how it is possible for a concrete and finite being of the ridiculously small dimensions in space and of the fleeting moment of time which man is, to experience a real feeling of love for an infinite, eternal, and incomprehensible Spirit. The love of the natural man plainly demands a relative object in order to be kindled—an objective being with more of substance to provoke relish of feeling than an infinite Spirit which, although present everywhere, is nowhere visible or anywise sensible, which cannot be conceived in human thought, and with which it is a contradiction in thought to suppose the concrete to

be in relations. Love in relation to such an indefinite negation is love in name only—it has no substance of meaning. In order to evoke real feeling in the mind, it has been found absolutely necessary to represent the Divine in a personal form—as a personal God directly governing the world, to whom prayers and praises and thanksgivings may be addressed by His creatures. But the misfortune is that an infinite personality is not really a consistent notion to the natural understanding of the natural man—it is a contradiction in thought and in terms, like a square circle or a finite infinite; for it is impossible for him to conceive a personality except under forms of space, under which, if infinite, it cannot be; and, granting the existence of an inconceivable personality, impossible for him to love and adore and supplicate and "look into the loving eyes of" what he cannot in the least conceive. This, then, is his unavoidable and perplexing dilemma—that, in order to love the infinite, he must make it personal, and in order to make the personal infinite, he must divest it of personality. Not as a natural man, therefore, is he capable of direct internal communion with God and of the joy of such loving intercourse; in order to reach that capacity, he must undergo the extraordinary and mysterious spiritual transformation by which he escapes for the occasion from the limits of personality. So it

has come to pass that there has been a sort of flux and reflux in the human mind through the later ages of its development. Men, having risen to the conception of a spiritual and infinite unity, could not stay in such a refined abstraction; they demanded intermediate agents or mediators, which then became the objects of devotion; and from them the gradual declension was to idolatry more and more gross, until the grossness of the corruption was such as to provoke a reaction towards purity.*

Is, then, the ecstatic love of God which he feels who has undergone the required spiritual conversion a genuine state with objective meaning, or is it a mere subjective state with the counterfeit of such meaning? In either case there is without doubt a strain of great nervous exaltation at the bottom of it; but the question is whether this intense state is a subjective dupery owing to a process of self-magnetism,† or whether it means an extraordinary spiritualization of being through supernatural influx.

* It was to guard against this tendency that Jews and Mahometans forbade the introduction of statues and pictures into their temples. And although the Greek Church excludes statues, any one who has seen a Russian peasant repeatedly crossing and prostrating himself before the pictures of the holy shrines, as he stops on his way past them to perform his mechanical devotions, may well think that it would have been well had pictures been excluded also.

† To use what I believe is an expression of Coleridge's in his *Table Talk*.

That it is induced voluntarily by dwelling with concentrated exclusiveness of thought and feeling on the divine nature and attributes, is entirely in conformity with the experience of those who induce the so-called mesmeric or hypnotic state by concentrating the attention on a single object until they undergo a kind of fascination, like a bird whose gaze a stealthily approaching cat has fixed, and with the mode in which St. Theresa and other saints of the same religion induced their trance-like states of ecstatic rapture. Undoubtedly, then, a state of special nervous exaltation, very like the state of divine ecstasy, can be engendered without any other than a simple physical significance; and undoubtedly the disposition of mind which is assiduously invoked and strained in order to attain to divine ecstasy is exactly that best fitted to induce the purely physical state. In no sense is the actual state counterfeit; it is a genuine neurosis, whatever its manner of production and however its accompanying psychosis may be interpreted.

Furthermore, it is necessary in this relation to take adequate account of the fact that a similar state of nervous ecstasy can be produced experimentally by the use of certain stimulating substances and vapours. A person may drug as well as think himself into the transcendent rapture. One of the effects of opium,

which is the temptation to its habitual use and abuse, is the pleasing state of exaltation of thought and feeling which it engenders, especially in such persons of imaginative temperament as are specially susceptible to this effect: it seems to impart a genial vital warmth to the whole being, suffusing the heart with expansive sentiments, stimulating the imagination to ethereal flights, giving large and lofty sweep to the projects of the intellect—necessarily, however, without corresponding power of will to execute them—and even expanding the natural forms of thought by easing or removing the restricting bonds of time and space and conditions. The terms of ordinary mental experience are rendered utterly inadequate to describe what is thought and felt; time, as De Quincey says, lengthens to infinity, and space swells to immensity; causality is extinguished in complete intuition into the relations of things, and other necessary forms of thought seem to fall away from the released mind, or to be so stretched out as to be scarcely sensible to it. The deliverance of the mind from the bondage of facts is just as if a creature which had hitherto, caterpillar-like, crept painfully along the ground, had suddenly burst, butterfly-like, into full powers of glorious flight; it is like that which befalls sometimes in dreams. Such is the extraordinary sense of freedom and well-being that, were the cause of the transport not known, it would

certainly be thought to mark an entrance into a higher spiritual sphere.

In essential nature the condition of things resembles that state of mental ignition which in olden times heralded or accompanied the prophetic rapture, and which in modern times frequently goes before an attack of acute mania; it is the result of a break of the equipoise between the individual and his surroundings by reason of his stimulated individuality, which, soaring above the level of its habitual adjustments, is naturally thrilled in so doing with a strange and illusive sense of transcendent power and freedom. As usual, when he has the least will he is most sure of its freedom. But he is compelled, like St. Augustine, to acknowledge sadly that it is a state which he cannot keep up, it not being of the earth earthy enough to be lasting; he must fall back from it, despite his utmost desires; and, however high he may soar in it, impartial observers perceive plainly that, although he is out of his normal relations, he does not soar above the natural world.

A still more acute sense of intense mental illumination is produced in some minds by the inhalation of nitrous oxide gas, commonly known as laughing-gas. This stimulating effect was experienced by Sir Humphry Davy, who, when he first inhaled it, was astonished at the apparent exaltation of his mental

powers, whereby difficulties of thought seemed to vanish as by magic, and no subject seemed too difficult of comprehension. A recent writer on metaphysical mental philosophy has recorded a similar experience. On him the effect was, he says, a "tremendously exciting sense of an intense metaphysical illumination," the first result of which was to make peal through him with unutterable power the conviction that Hegelism was true. It was "a perfect delirium of theoretic rapture," the characteristic feature of which was "the identification of opposites." * Thus it appears that by suitable physical agencies the nervous system may be put into a state in which the identification of opposites is accomplished with the same perfect ease as in dreams—at any rate, by a mind accustomed to occupy itself with such high thoughts; but when the induced state is past, the mode of identification is past also, and the opposites remain as before. It is just as it is with the man who, having communed with God in a spiritual ecstasy, communes with men afterwards without showing any effects of so transcendent an experience; for not now, as aforetime, are marks of the divine converse seen in a luminous afterglow of face and thoughts. The neurosis past, the corresponding psychosis passes also.

* The reference, which I have lost, is to an article which appeared some time ago in the journal called *Mind*.

Like intoxicating effects upon the mental functions of the brain are produced by other substances, notably by haschisch, but it is not necessary here to enter into a description of their several effects. Having set forth plainly two clear facts—the undeniable physical origin and basis of the state of mental transport in some instances, and the practicability of also bringing the physical state on by a process of mental induction, which may be described as a process of self-magnetism, —it remains only to consider whether the state of spiritualization during which the subject is rapt in ecstatic intuition of the divine attributes and ecstatic fruition of divine love, is actually a state of self-magnetization; whether, although more than ordinary, it is ever anything more than natural.* The individual's certitude after he has undergone the transcendent experience goes for nothing in the matter; it is no greater than that of the mediæval saint who

* This is how one of the latest and most accomplished writers speaks of the spiritual intoxication in himself, and of its pernicious effects: "Il me faut un effort pour me repaisir, pour m'affirmer et me personnaliser. L'abîme m'attire, m'entraîne toujours. L'infini me tente, le mystère me fascine, l'unification, l'*hénose* de Plotin m'enivre comme un philtre. C'est mon opium, mon haschisch." (*Henri Frédéric Amiel*, vol. i. p. 39.)

And again: "Je comprends la volupté bouddique des Soufis, le kief des Turcs, l'extase des Orientaux. Et pourtant je sens aussi que cette volupté est léthifère, qu'elle est, comme l'usage de l'opium et du haschisch, un suicide lent; qu'elle est inférieure d'ailleurs à la joie d'énergie, à la douceur de l'amour, à la beauté de l'enthousiasme, à la saveur sacrée du devoir accompli." (Ibid., vol. i. p. 132.)

had in her raptures actual visions of God and talked familiarly with Him; while the consent of others to the reality of the supernatural intercourse is no more than the consent of those who have inherited the same theological traditions, learned the same special doctrines, breathed the same atmosphere of sentiments, observed the same rites of worship, and assiduously trained their nervous systems into such habits of exercise as that, when put into a state of ecstasy by practice of the fit means, these naturally and inevitably express similar transcendent feelings and thoughts of spiritual illumination. Is it a light, then, by which the individual sees more clearly, or such a blinding light as prevents him from seeing at all? Neither his own intense certitude nor the unanimous assent of others like-minded, were it always to be had, ought to be allowed to stand in the way of a rigorous scientific investigation of the phenomena, or in the least degree to hinder or discredit a natural explanation of them, if such be attainable.

To obtain the unqualified assent which it challenges for itself, obviously supernatural intuition ought to be guaranteed. And whence can that guarantee come, save from an infallible authority? And where is such authority to be found, unless it be in the Roman Catholic Church, whose fundamental dogma it is to

accept the definitions and declarations of its head in matters of faith as infallible? The fundamental dogma of Protestantism, on the other hand, is the exclusive authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the individual's private judgment the rule of their interpretation: all which amounts simply to the consecration of anarchy. Nothing can be more flagrant than the contrast of the Protestant's freedom of thought with the indispensable and elementary postulate of the Catholic faith, which is to hold true all that the Church teaches or shall at any future time teach; devoutly to believe the right function of reason in all matters of faith to be to reason itself into assent, even though it be to its own stultification; resolutely to make it the one aim and end of its exercise so completely to impregnate the mind with the truth of the Catholic religion as that it shall become a matter of direct sensibility and immediate assent. "The Catholic religion is true because it has about it an odour of truth and sanctity, *sui generis*, as perceptible to my moral nature as flowers to my sense, such as can only come from heaven." *

The process is evident and, when thorough, effective. It is a process of simple organic manufacture—to mould the nature patiently and assiduously into organic conformity with all the requirements of a particular system

* *Grammar of Assent*, p. 212.

of religious belief and practice, by exclusive devotion of thought, feeling, and conduct to its service in a fit atmosphere. When that has been done thoroughly, as it may certainly be done, if the work of moulding be begun early enough and continued long enough—man being a plastic organism—the proof that it has been done thoroughly will be that the particular system of religion is known to be true by direct feeling, for it will then exhale an odour of truth and sanctity as perceptible to the fitly moulded nature as flowers to sense. As always, the habit-formed structure will feel the joy of function. Such we are to accept as the final goal of the development of human reason in all places and in all peoples, the beginning and end of wisdom, now and for ever. Man need not trouble himself any more about truth during the countless ages that he shall last on earth.

Assume the infallible end and pursue assiduously the fit means to attain it, without doubt the desired effect will follow in due time; but without doubt a similar effect would follow the assiduous pursuit of similar means of persistent mental moulding in relation to any other system of religion which was not infallibly true to begin with. Is it not quite possible that a person might in like manner, by a fit process of exclusive training, so fashion his nature as to render it capable of finding sublime intuition and

ravishing ecstasy in the rapt contemplation of a decimal fraction? *

The terms *ecstasy* and *rapture*, which are in use to describe the extraordinary mental transport, are not without instruction when they are traced back to their original and etymological meaning. *Ecstasy* means literally a standing out of self (ἔκ στάσις), and *rapture* a state in which the individual is rapt or carried away from himself; and inasmuch as the soul was the self, there was nothing else to do in former times but conclude that the soul was seized and taken possession of by some supernatural power, divine or diabolic. If we now look upon the state as an induced neurosis, —as, on the whole, it seems more in conformity with such knowledge as we have, and such reason as we are possessed of, to do—the original meaning of the terms has still a large measure of applicability; for the theory in that case is that a certain order of nerve-centres or nerve-tracts is thrown into a state of extraordinary ultra-physiological activity, of almost delirious or convulsive character, in which and by

* Note how eagerly the acute legal intellect, well trained in the subtilties of its work, fastens on "nice points of law," and with what joy it goes into endless consideration and discussion of them, without the most learned judges, after long conferences in solemn conclave, ever being able to arrive at a common conclusion; notwithstanding that the natural conclusion may appear to ordinary common sense "as plain as way to parish church," or, if not that, not to be arrived at by discussion lasting till doomsday.

which they are cut off from their natural functional relations with their connected nerve-centres and nerve-tracts; a sort of molecular dislocation or disjunction of their natural connections being produced, they are put into a state of induction in which conduction is blocked; they stand out, therefore, in their special activity rapt into a delirium of function, transporting them out of and severing them from the ordinary operations of reason and will, which, as consciousness is absorbed in the ecstatic function, are suspended. Such is the ravishing effect of the supernatural influx on the special nerve-tract. The self being, as it were, transported out of self during the function, the individual is not himself but a partial or disintegrate self, to all intents and purposes another self; and it cannot be otherwise, if the physiological interpretation be correct, because the exclusive activity of a particular order of nerve-tracts must be a disruption or dissolution of the mental self for the time being, just as the convulsion of a limb is a disruption of the bodily self, as a physiological unity, for the time being.

When the abnormal state is past, and the individual comes to himself, it would be unreasonable to expect his natural character to exhibit many or any traces of his extraordinary, if not extranatural, experience. The more intense and delirious the spiritual ecstasy is, the more completely does it stand out from his

ordinary life and character and the more entirely is it an event apart from them. He may be compared to a person who, having been in a hypnotic or an epileptic state of abnormal consciousness, forgets nearly or entirely, when he comes to himself, all that he thought and felt during it, or at best remembers it only as if it had happened to a self so strange as to seem somebody else. It is not, therefore, surprising if the persons who undergo these ecstasies are not more holy than other persons when they are not in them. They have not been more sincere, self-denying, self-sacrificing, habitually thoughtful for others in the ordinary endurances and struggles and trials of daily life; on the contrary, they have many times shown less of the disciplined self-control, the quiet self-renunciations, the patient forbearances, the prudent foresights, and other homely virtues which, not suiting the lofty exaltations of the spiritual temperament, nevertheless make the happiness of others. They are so much occupied with straining self to its high special functions that they neglect the proper cultivation of its relations to the not-self, social and material; and the more readily, as such cultivation consists not with the strained functions they affect. In the end, the spiritual intoxication to which they give themselves up becomes a perilous or positively pernicious form of self-indulgence which strengthens

not, but weakens, the fibre of the moral character; not otherwise than as the unwholesome practice of inducing mesmeric, hypnotic, and so-called spiritualistic states undermines the moral energy and will of those who addict themselves to it, and leads surely towards badness or madness.

In face of the claim to finer spiritual sense and superior moral feeling made by those who profess to undergo divine intoxication, it is right to take their lives and characters into account simply as facts of observation, and to inquire in a scientific spirit how far these verify their pretensions. Now, so far from their intimate lives and characters being more holy, either in the original sense of more healthy or wholesome, or in its later sense of more moral or sacred, than those of others who make no such claim, and thus confirming by tangible proof their intangible pretensions, they do not rise above, if they do not fall below, the average level of goodness in sincerity of nature, in genuine consideration of others, in quiet self-suppression, in manliness of feeling, in sound judgment of men and things, and in wise conduct of life. How often are they altogether wanting in sobriety of judgment and in sincerity and solidity of character! In order to suit the vividness of their imaginative notions, they attend only to mood-agreeing points, which they exaggerate and embellish, and

they ignore or disparage disagreeing evidence; the sufficient justification of an alleged fact to them being that it accords with their present mood of feeling, the sufficient refutation of it that it does not. To be illogical, or above logic, is the special note, and what they consider to be the special privilege, of their superior nature as members of a moral aristocracy. Essentially, however innocently, therefore, they are prone to be untruthful and untrustworthy. Their histories, the conclusive exponents of their characters, fail not, when surveyed with cool sincerity and dispassionate insight, to prove in many cases how badly it would go with the affairs of the world had not other persons sounder sense, more sobriety of judgment, less indulgence of sentiment, and greater veracity of nature than they possess.*

* Even when they shut themselves up in convents or monasteries, or in their closets, in order to pursue an undistracted spiritual life, and thus escape, in their sheltered solitude, from the manifold occasions of suffering and doing afforded by a worldly life—from the duties that subordinate self and the trials that make strong—their "cloistered virtue" has not fibre enough to support them against the petty miseries to which they are exposed; they become meanly and miserably dependent upon their little interests and occupations and comforts, singularly exacting of what they deem themselves entitled to, and irritably impatient of any disturbance of their habits. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose the convent or monastery to be generally the peaceful abode of virtuous serenity; all the ordinary passions of human nature are seething there, and, being without scope of free exercise, they are liable to be engaged in mean jealousies, petty interests, trivial objects, and artificial gratifications.

Without doubt they sometimes deserve the greatest moral credit for their persistent and painstaking endeavours, by strain of spiritual illumination, consciously to avoid the inconstancies and insincerities and unveracities of thought and feeling into which their peculiarly constructed minds, predisposing them to delirious strains of thought and feeling, are ever prone to lead them unconsciously; but for them, as for others, it is impossible entirely to eradicate nature, whose fundamental note of frailty, as previously pointed out, is commonly a want of thorough unity of constitution. Justly, then, may the world hesitate to accept their intuitive certitude of divine communion as indisputable, whose opinions in all other relations of life are very disputable; and it may continue with good reason to hold the common experience of the race, in a matter where the way is open to everybody to obtain experience, to be more trustworthy than the uncommon experience of any individual. Proof is yet wanting that the sensibility which is claimed by its possessor as superfine spiritual sense is more than the shrinking inability of a sensitive nature to look facts sincerely in the face and faithfully to assimilate them, and its eager and self-indulgent escape from their rude realism into the gratification of strains of subjective idealism, be they ever so thin and unsubstantial

—a selfish retreat from the shock of facts to the shelter of faith.

It may be better for a person of such order of temperament to indulge delirious strains of theological feeling than to go astray in other sorts of delirium, as he might otherwise do; yet it is none the less a fundamental misfortune of his nature that he is under any such necessity. At the best they are pernicious rather than profitable; they mean an internal stimulation of function without adequate external objective; and all stimulation of that sort is of the nature of intoxication, which, exhilarating enough while it lasts, is hurtful in the end. Hysteria furnishes the most common type of unwholesome stimulation of feeling without corresponding function; its propitious occasion notably being the invasion of the mind by the feelings that attend the awakening reproductive function, without expenditure of feeling in action. The one solid test of wholesome feeling is its capability of being put into useful action. Not the laboured thinking of high thoughts, nor the strained feeling of fine feelings, nor the tortured ingenuity to express them eloquently, but the doing of good deeds, the being one with his kind, it is which best develops sympathetic feelings and humane instincts of a manly and salutary type. The natural effect of the habitual indulgence of emotion divorced from activity, or in excess of the

proper activity, is to engender self-deception and hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious; it is an egoistic intoxication of the individual by supposed altruistic emotion, with an incapacity of corresponding self-sacrifice in action. The ideal practical life might be described as the full and exact and fit response of work to impression—in other words, as thoroughly adaptive reflex function. Such an apt life of fit feeling and action is an excellent way to keep emotion in due proportion and congruity; for just as it imparts real and exact meaning to language, which, without it, is vague, confused, and of double sense, so it compresses and utilizes, in order to form fruit, the emotional energy whose unrestrained tendency is to run into luxuriant growth of useless foliage, whereby there comes to pass little or no fruit of self-renunciation in homely good works, but, instead, much talk thereof with selfish action. Is *uninformed* emotion any better really than uninformed understanding? frenzy of feeling worth more than frenzy of thought?

All this one may devoutly believe, without on that account entertaining the smallest expectation that people will cease to gratify themselves with the excessive stimulation of emotion and with the outpouring of it in fitly answering wails and cries and shrieks; or that they will fail to procure the increase of it through the infection of numbers undergoing a similar

self-inflaming process—such contagious increase as the many and absurd epidemics of superstitious emotion in the past, affecting whole bodies of people, witness to.*

* Several examples of which will be found related in Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*. Similar epidemics occur still from time to time. In July of this year (1885), at the village of Corano, near Piacenza, in Italy, a little girl of eleven years of age saw on the mountain-road a most beautiful lady, dressed in blue, who informed her that she was the Madonna. She then disappeared, but a few hours afterwards all Corano had learnt what the girl had seen. This was what thereupon ensued, according to the correspondent of the *Times* newspaper—

"Some were incredulous, but the greater number did not for a moment discuss the veracity of the girl's statement. Desolina was hailed as the favourite child of the Madonna, and the whole population went out in procession to the spot at the entrance of the wood. From that moment there commenced a literal epidemic of ecstasies and visions. While I write, more than thirty little girls declare that they have seen and are in direct communication with the Madonna. To these are added men and women, young and old, married and single. For miles round this village the country has the appearance of the Tuscan Maremma at the time of the unfortunate prophet of Arcidosso, David Lazzaretti. Hanging from the branches of the trees and on the hedges on all sides are offerings presented by the peasants to the miraculous shrine, which at present consists of a basket, draped with three or four cloths, on the roadside, to the right, as you proceed towards Corano.

"Hundreds and hundreds of persons are seen labouring up the steep ascent, under the burning rays of the July sun. Some girls scramble up the bare rocks, supplicating the Virgin with loud cries to appear, until they faint with fatigue. Recovering their senses, they say that they hear the voice of the Madonna, while all present fall on the ground, kissing the earth, with convulsive sobs and floods of tears. A profound impression is produced. To aggravate matters, women known to be hysterical sing, laugh, and cry, causing others to imitate them. While I write this, thousands are thronging hither from

If there is one thing which the history of the human race discloses plainly, it is the eagerness with which it has addicted itself to the use of intoxicants of one kind or another wherever it has had the opportunity. Indeed, it is an observation not less curious than instructive, that, while the nations of the past, whether savage, barbarous, or comparatively civilized, have shown everywhere a remarkable ingenuity in the construction of weapons and in the discovery of substances to inflict injuries and diseases, they have shown little or none anywhere in the discovery of the medicinal substances which are useful in the cure of injuries and diseases; the only substances of the kind which most of them did discover being such as created a momentary kingdom of illusive bliss by stimulating the passions of mind and body—intoxicants and aphrodisiacs. Always has man felt the necessity, and been carried away by the delight, of being transported into the realm of idealism: always has he been urged to supplement the pessimism of facts by the optimism of theory. And what privilege of nature has the delirious feeling and imagination which a person deliberately generates by

the valleys of the old Duchies, from Piedmont, from Liguria, from Lombardy. The number is estimated at sixteen thousand.

"The authorities are now interfering, and it is high time. Several doctors who have visited the place declare that the spread of this hallucination is likely to assume very alarming proportions."

a process of self-induction over the delirious feeling and imagination into which he deliberately drugs himself? The artificial privilege of birth it may have, but other privilege it has none.

Section VI.

ISOLATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

If the foregoing exposition be true, it is not surprising that progress in understanding of things material and temporal, and progress in the revelation of things spiritual and eternal, do not go along together. Their principles are plainly so antagonistic and mutually exclusive that, unless they keep entirely aloof, the issue of their conflict must inevitably be the subjection of the one to the other. The reforms in religion which have come to pass in the world at different times appear to have been independent of the understanding, which they did not improve, and often of the character too. Those who accepted the new faith were not made wiser, even when they were made better by it. To take one example: however much there may be to admire in the character and conduct of the great hero of the Protestant Reformation—and one large class of Christians find nothing at all to esteem in him—no one can admire the bigoted ignorance

with which he clung to his barbarous and cruel notions concerning witches and their doings, and the gross inhumanity to them which he earnestly advocated. "I would have no pity on these witches; I would burn them all," he says. Following his teachings in that respect, the Protestants and Puritans of old and new England, in the tortures and deaths which they inflicted on the poor wretches suspected or accused of witchcraft, contributed to history one of the most humiliating chapters of human folly.

So it was: a mighty revolution of religious thought and feeling, springing from a revolt against idolatry and superstition, without the least solvent effect upon a degrading superstition so grossly silly that it has always been and is the widespread and afflicting scourge of savage and barbarous peoples, and directly repugnant to an elementary knowledge of natural things. Nay, so far from the effect being to weaken, it was to strengthen, the hideous superstition; for it was in the name of God, and in pious zeal for His honour and glory, that the bloody persecution was undertaken and carried relentlessly through. That was the proof of earnest Christianity then which would be thought the negation of Christianity now. Ample proof, were proof necessary, how entirely a revolution of thought along theological lines may stand apart from any improvement of the understanding

and conduct generally: the two things as far aloof and as little akin as if they belonged to differently constituted inhabitants of different planets.

But a still more impressive and illustrious example might be summoned in solemn evidence. Reflect how entirely Christianity went its independent way in the insolent vigour of its youth and prime, abandoning with contempt all the priceless acquisitions in philosophy, science, and art which had been slowly made by the successive labours of the best intellects of Greece and Rome, and initiating dark ages of intellectual barbarism in the history of mankind. Only in resolute spite of its hostility did knowledge struggle slowly and painfully into existence again after a long submergence; for during the period of intellectual darkness which elapsed from the time when Christianity spread through the decaying Roman Empire, to the time of the modern revival of learning, while it exercised full and unchecked sway over the minds of Western nations, there was not alone a suspension of intellectual growth, but a degradation of understanding reaching in many respects to the depths of barbarism. Nor was there, perhaps, any equal period in human history in which, among an equal number of people, more wars were undertaken, more blood was shed, more tortures were inflicted, more sufferings were endured; at any rate, not any period

in the history of the world in which so many horrors were practised in the name of a gospel of peace and good will among men. So little had a revolution of thought in relation to the supernatural to do with furthering the aim and work of man's natural understanding.

With the race as with the individual, then, a theological ecstasy is something which for the most part stands aloof from the normal life, and is without good effect upon the understanding and conduct; its solid benefits, when there are any, being those of national consolidation and union, which it may help to bring about; in itself it is like an intervening delirium or convulsion which has its hour and passes —something apart from the normal line of development of the race. To admit the validity of its method of revelation side by side with that of the method of knowledge proper to the natural understanding is to drive a sundering cleft right down through the mental being of the individual, and so to prevent absolutely a real unity of thought and feeling; it is to do the utmost possible by art to make him the inconsistent being which he is by nature when he is the ill-

* It was, indeed, because men's minds were exclusively occupied with its supernatural dogmas and its rites and ceremonies, in entire neglect of its true moral meaning as a social force. The theologies have always been the destructive parasites of religions. The relations of Christianity to slavery and slave-owning illustrate a similar lesson.

compacted issue of faulty lineage. Any one who wished to breed a unity-lacking nature in his progeny, excellently adapted to break down into some form of madness or badness, could scarce do better than cultivate in himself the two incompatible methods so sedulously and sincerely as never to suspect what a contradiction in being he was actually. Let him bring, in process of successive development, the functions of self-collusion, self-deception, hypocrisy, in their ascending degrees of least conscious and most conscious, and finally supreme self-gratulation on the success of his special discipline, to prevail or preside in the formation of his mental texture, and he can hardly fail to fashion a mental organization which will display in function, and transmit in generation, what is implicit in structure.

Section VII.

THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS.

If a knowledge of nature by the method of observation and reflection seem irreconcilably opposed to, and vitally incompatible with, any knowledge of it, or of a supernature, by a method of pure internal intuition—the two methods by their principles doomed to a truceless conflict—it is not the less true that the

latter method may always claim the countenance and aid of metaphysics. The metaphysical method rests on the same footing as the method of theological intuition—is essentially at one with it. Shutting his eyes and closing his ears to what is outside him; suspending as much as possible, indeed, the functions of his external senses, and the wholesome operations of reflection on the facts obtained through them; and thus withdrawing his mind from all outward distractions into a pure internal contemplation of itself and its forms of activity, in which he strains to achieve a complete self-absorption undefiled by things of sense; —the accomplished metaphysician, like the theologian, finally succeeds in achieving a process of self-magnetization, which is the counterpart of the ecstasy into which the latter works himself; and in that detached state of sublimated mental function it is that he has access to the inmost and highest secrets of beings—is at congenial home with supreme substance, the absolute ego, free-will, intuitions of pure reason, infinite space and time, infinite perfection, the identification of opposites, and like formless strains of thought attesting themselves as intuitions of supra-sensual origin and nature. If these states are genuine revelations of the highest truths, and therefore of supreme worth, then those persons who are not capable of achieving them, and do not recognize their

transcendent value, are simply beings of inferior nature who merit the sort of compassion which is bestowed upon the blind man by those who have the use of their eyes; but if, on the other hand, they are the objectivations of straining ineptitudes, subjective duperies, then he who undergoes them may not unfitly be compared to one who, having thrown his muscles into a cataleptic rigidity, and thus divested their movements of all form and purpose *quoad* natural function, feels the formless activity engendered, unlike as it is to all his ordinary experience, to be supernatural and divine experience.* Naturally, the induction of such a metaphysical strain of thought is accomplished more successfully the more free the mind is from the solid and consolidating acquisitions of positive knowledge of nature and practical experience of men and things, and the more it has accustomed itself by practice to the stimulation of self-absorbing ecstasies of substance-lacking thought. It is not surprising, then, that theology and metaphysics have been instinctive allies, and still count upon one another for mutual aid and comfort in

* In conformity with man's wonted habit of regarding abnormal and mysterious phenomena as effects of supernatural causes—*e.g.* epilepsy, which appals him by its terrible convulsions, as due to the entrance of a spirit; madness, which sinks him below the level of beasts, as the channel of direct communication with the Deity; earthquakes, comets, and other disorders of nature, which terrify him out of his senses, as produced by special supernatural interventions.

offensive and defensive alliance. Unhappily, their long union has been a union of fruitless embraces.

It was Coleridge who, after imbuing his richly endowed and largely absorbent mind with suitable metaphysical nourishment from German fountains, did most in this country to cement the alliance, and thought to draw the largest consequences from it; basing his big-looming schemes of a mighty constructive philosophy upon the essential and profoundly significant distinction which he alleged to exist between *reason* and *understanding*. Nothing more came of the momentous distinction in his case than the repeated enforcement of its vast importance and the obscure intimation of the magnificent consequences which were to ensue from the union of philosophy and theology in the lofty realms of pure reason. Those who, inspired by his faith, have since endeavoured to realize his schemes by setting forth the fruits of the happy marriage, have not hitherto furnished an edifying system; they have presented rather to the world the discomposing spectacle of earnest persons in great throes of labour to bring forth what they have not maturely conceived.

Now, it is certain that a great idealism of any sort, like a theory which is not entirely baseless, will always find many points of support in the multitudinous analogies that are afforded by the changing aspects

and endless varieties of nature, and that whoever chooses to build it up systematically by patiently and ingeniously seeking assimilable relations in every quarter, and wittingly or unwittingly turning away from all the facts which conflict with or contradict its principle and cannot be appropriated to help its growth, may succeed in building a very imposing edifice. Any number of pretentious philosophical structures may be raised in that way; and to the greater height the greater the ingenuity and industry of their architects in seeking the material which they want, and in avoiding that which they do not want, for their building purposes. But the way is not the way of true knowledge, and the structures so built are artificial and frail in the end; like the sand-castles which children rear on the seashore, they require not to be taken too seriously. Any one who, heeding not the prohibitive outcry of their supporters, insists on making a real test of the validity of their pretence by applying the practical knowledge of the understanding to try the solidity and worth of them, is pretty sure to be denounced clamorously as a coarse and rude fellow, without faculty of spiritual insight, of hard and contracted understanding, sunk in the gross materialism of mere sense-knowledge.

Any system, whether philosophical or theological, which does not embrace the facts, be it the most lofty

and spiritual in the world, but shrinks and shelters itself from unwelcome facts, is as ill-grounded and inadequate as the meanest theory which behaves in a similar fashion—essentially a structure apart from the living body of true knowledge, not an organic part of it. Not the facts only which agree with it, whether facts of intuition or observation, but the facts which disagree with it, have to be taken account of. Although it be built up by intuition, a marvel of nice ingenuity and elaborate constructive skill, no goodness of intention, no grandeur of design, no devotion of disciples, will secure it from the hard necessity of verification by observation and induction, or compensate for its inherent weakness if it fail to stand that test. Highly as he esteems the invaluable privilege of his birth and nurture in a Christian land, the dispassionate Christian cannot hesitate to face and accept the conclusion that his holy religion must infallibly take its place in history some day as a superstition, unless it proves its capability of adaptation to human nature by a more successful realization in practice in the future than it has attained in the past; not in the lives only of the minority of men who profess its faith, but in the thoughts and lives of the great majority who do not profess it. That can never be acknowledged unreservedly as the true theory of religion which, taking no account of

the unnumbered multitudes who have lived and died before its birth, continues to be what since its late birth it has been and is now, a saving grace to a small portion only of the countless myriads of the human race.

Not by standing out of nature in the ecstasy of a rapt and overstrained idealism of any sort, but by large and close and faithful converse with nature and human nature in all their moods, aspects, and relations, is the solid basis of fruitful ideals and the soundest mental development laid. The endeavour to stimulate and strain any mental function to an activity beyond the reach and need of a physical correlate in external nature, and to give it an independent value, is certainly an endeavour to go directly contrary to the sober and salutary method by which solid human development has taken place in the past, and is taking place in the present. The speculative philosopher who, without the adequate basis of positive experience, thinks out systems of the universe at his ease in his closet is manifestly little better employed, for the most part, than the poet of old was when he constructed ingenious and interesting nature-explaining myths, or than the theologian who works himself with deliberate intent into artificial states of divine intoxication or ecstasy in reference to an incomprehensible mystery. Theologian and philosopher alike

exhibit the strained functions of a sort of *psycholepsy*, which, conducive to an exaggerated self-consciousness, is not equally conducive to ultimate health and strength of mind.

It may not, perhaps, be untrue to say of every valid human thought and feeling, of all genuine knowledge, that it represents the formation of a complete and fit circuit between the individual and nature; that a mental apprehension means, at bottom, directly or indirectly, a corresponding motor apprehension, actual or potential; that the special reaction is as necessary as the special impression to the clearness and definiteness of the conception—a fit portion of nature being thus, as it were, interposed and grasped between the ingoing and outgoing current, and making the circuit complete. If this be so, there is an incompleteness or break of circuit when the mutual adaptation is inadequate or interrupted, which is probably the condition of the occurrence of consciousness; for it is pretty certain that, if the circuit were complete and fit in every particular, there would be full unity of man and nature, and no consciousness.* What else, then, is transcendent metaphysical thought and feeling but the designed and methodical culture of a

* It is not apparently in assimilation of like, but in discrimination of unlike, that consciousness arises, and it is notably in the complete assimilations signified by formed habits of perception, thought, and action that it almost or quite lapses again.

break of circuit and the pernicious negation of the true method of knowledge? Instead of labouring patiently to make fit circuit in every case, and to restore it when interrupted, the transcendental metaphysician determinedly strains to break circuit by severing himself from the outward fact and relations; aims to make the interruption more and more complete by his convulsive inner straining; and hinders, by all the means in his power, the restoration of the natural condition. He does deliberately for himself, as a method, what prejudice, passion, and temper do unconsciously for the individual whose perceptions and reflections they disturb and vitiate; and he measures the height of his metaphysical faculty by the height of his success in such psycholeptic sleights of thought.

However much he may esteem his method and its results—and inevitably the delightful sense of freedom and power in the stimulation of function without use leads him to overestimate it—the ecstasies of thought and feeling which he achieves, whether theological or metaphysical, are entirely personal; they have no authoritative value, no objective validity, for any other person; and it yet remains to be proved that his most strained achievements are of any more real worth to his own mind than the ecstatic, hysteric, cataleptic, and like raptures which they resemble are to

the minds of those who are subject to them. Looking on man as an organic part of nature, nowise separable from it while he is in it, and as increasing in faculty only so far as he gains from it—as the nature-made mean by which nature is progressively modified—it is legitimate to view these transcendent functions of mind as functions gone astray, and to conclude the right method of mental culture to be, not to develop such malfunction by artificial internal means, but by natural external culture of large extent and varied character so to nourish, consolidate, and fortify the mind as to render such abnormal development difficult or impossible. He must consent to relinquish the vain quest for absolute truth, of which he is incapable, and be content to use the relative truth of which he is capable, for the humble purposes of a gradually progressive development.

STATEMENT OF THE CONCLUSION.

If the facts and arguments set forth in the foregoing pages are soundly based and sound in themselves, they go a long way to show that malobservation and misinterpretation of nature have been the unsound foundations of theories of the supernatural; that its seeming phenomena have not ever been, nor are ever now, events of the external world, but have always been, and are, fables of the imagination; that the concern and interest of them are purely psychological,—mankind, like one floating down a stream, having imagined its movements to be a movement of the unmoving land. Lacking, therefore, any vestige of solid support in sound observation and reasoning, they survive in modern thought only by virtue of their pretensions to a supernatural authority above all observation and reasoning. Poor, indeed, they were but for that pretension, and none so poor as to do them reverence. By bringing the phenomena within the compass of scientific investigation, and setting

forth the modes of their natural origin and growth, the need and credit of such authority are alike invalidated, at the same time that the obligations of scientific method are fulfilled. If it come to pass in the last days that a Spirit is poured out on all flesh, so that sons, and daughters, and servants, and handmaidens prophesy, and young men see visions and old men dream dreams, one may fairly anticipate that the strange events will be considered, not as evidences of supernatural influx, but as phenomena belonging to the domain of medical psychology.

Notwithstanding the long history and the large influence of supernatural beliefs in human thought, it is no more difficult to conceive their ceasing to be than to conceive their coming into being. The one may well happen just as inevitably as we have every reason to believe that the other happened; to die is as natural to a superstition as to be born. Certainly it has been, and still is, a disputed point whether there is now, or ever was anywhere, a savage nation devoid of some glimmering notions of religion; by which is always meant apparently some notions of spiritual beings, fine or coarse in quality, and of the continuance of the individual spirit after the death of its body. The evidence of travellers is contradictory, some of them declaring positively that they have encountered savages who were without the least trace of such

beliefs, while others, claiming to have taken greater pains to enter into the thoughts and feelings of these uncultured people, believe they have discovered the most positive evidence of the existence of them.*

The dispute in the end is not of very weighty moment; for if the theory of evolution be true, as persons of all creeds seem to be gradually inclining their hearts and minds to admit, there must have been a point somewhere in the becoming of man when the divine spirit was breathed first into him and he became a living soul capable of supernatural beliefs and immortal longings. That admission excludes the notion of their universality. Moreover, those who, ignoring this insuperable difficulty in their way, claim the universality of them in proof of the truth of spiritual things, ought to weigh well these reflections: first, that savages have the most plentiful supply of spiritual existences, since they ascribe spirits, not to men and women only, but to horses and other animals, and even to bows and arrows, axes, knives, and other implements of warfare and utensils of do-

* So far as it goes, the evidence appears to prove that most savages have some sort of notions of supernatural beings and of another life, but that some few very low savages are entirely destitute of any notions of the kind. The supernatural notions entertained are of all degrees of crudity, and almost as various as the peoples. One might say of them as Jeremiah exclaimed to the idolatrous Jews, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah" (Jer. ii. 28).

mestic use, which they bury with their dead, in order that these may have the use of the spirit-forms of them in the spiritual world;* second, that it has been an undeniable result of the progress of human culture through the ages to contract the range and thin the number of spiritual existences, as well as gradually to attenuate and refine the character of them; all inanimate and most animate objects having been by degrees divested of their spiritual nature, and the pale, dim, ethereal shade or ghost-like phantom of the bodily form, lingering and pining around the scenes of its life in the body—which is the savage's crude notion of a spirit—having been raised by sublimation to the spiritual height and refinement of an

* The savage, in fact, assigns its special spirit to each material thing, and regards spirit as a sort of finely attenuated matter. The Indian of Guiana, for example, believes that every material object has its spirit, and that the spirits of things and persons can leave them at will to do just what they could do when united to their bodies. He is convinced that everything which he sees and suffers in dreams is real, his detached spirit actually doing and undergoing what he dreams, and will take vengeance on any one by whom he dreams that he has been injured. As a consequence, he holds that some persons can send out their spirits at will and do great harm to any one whom they wish to injure—administer poison, inflict pain, produce disease, cause death. Natural disease being inconceivable to him, he cannot understand how any one should die unless he were injured by the spirit sent forth by one of these persons whom he calls a "kenaima." To protect himself from this mysterious agency of evil, he has recourse to the medicine-man, or peaiman, who keeps off the kenaima by his ceremonials, and drives them away when they have entered his body and caused sickness. (*Among the Indians in Guiana*, by Everard im Thurn.)

entirely immaterial, invisible, metaphysical entity, the formless inhabitant of infinity and eternity.

If any conclusion can fitly be drawn from a comparison of the religious notions of savages with the religious notions of civilized races, which are really alike only in being called by a common name, it is the conclusion that a process of contraction, thinning, and refinement which has gone on so long and so steadily will continue to go on with the advancing development of the human mind, until spirits are squeezed and refined out of existence.

Is that the probable fate of the last surviving supernatural beliefs in the most civilized countries—namely, the belief of a supernatural Providence who in the beginning created the earth for man's uses, and has ever since exercised watchful interposition in his affairs, and the belief of an eternal life for him in the heavens when his brief life on earth is ended? Obviously these are instinctive protests against the miseries and injustices of this life; they are compensatory notions of recompense, which enable men to bear their burdens and confront their trials with resignation and even joyful hope; since they imply that the misery and injustice are apparent only, being the wise ordinances of an unsearchable Being, whose mysterious ways are past finding out, and that of a certainty what is obscure will be clear, right be done,

and recompense made, in the life to come. Both beliefs, therefore, are plainly instinct with egoism; they are its supreme expression. It does not on that account follow, however, that they are fictitious. Humanity did not create itself, and is not responsible for this protestation which its conscience makes against the cruel order of the natural world. Whence, then, this obstinate adherence to the notion of justice and recompense? Why does man earnestly revolt against the natural order of which he is a natural product? How is it that this natural order breeds naturally this censure of itself? Is the aspiration after a more perfect state of being the guarantee that a more perfect state will be? Reflecting on these obscure questions, it is easy to understand how the necessity of a recourse to supernatural explanation has arisen; reflecting on the proffered explanation, it is not easy to understand how it can be acknowledged to explain anything. Nominally an explanation, it is little more virtually than the restatement of the incomprehensible difficulty in the terms of an unknown language.

Before men conclude their feelings of revolt against the injustice of the order of nature to spring from the profound instinct of the eternal in the human heart, and base on them the tremendous superstructure of future compensation throughout eternity, they ought,

perhaps, to ask whether it would really be just, whether in truth it would not be gross injustice, that they should have such a recompense. In the first place, the recompense sought is out of all proportion to the suffering undergone or the merit shown, since it is a claim to eternity in compensation for a moment; in the second place, the compensation ought certainly to include other living creatures besides man, since it would not be just that they, unlike him, should be nowise indemnified for their great and grievous sufferings in this world, the worst of which, perhaps, are inflicted upon them by him advisedly for his uses or wantonly for his pleasures. Is it just that he, the great criminal, should be rewarded, and that they, the helpless victims, should have no compensation? The fact that man does not really take serious thought of this injustice, or thinks the injustice fully justified by his pre-eminence, shows how much he is thinking of himself only in the matter; it is proof that his notions of his own special destiny are inspired by egoism. That being so, it is clearly quite possible that his protest against the completeness of the order of nature in his case is the wail of egoism, which uses all it can for its profit, rebelling against the subordination of itself to the whole, which in the end uses it for its profit; exacting an order of things conformable to its pretensions as

the aim and end of things created; postulating an immortal satisfaction of its delirious desires; and that his supernatural aspirations will die out when, by attaining to a true and complete knowledge of his own nature and of its relations to external nature, he ceases to distinguish himself absolutely from the rest of nature and gains a true sense of proportion. A just sense of proportion is a saving grace to the individual, and it may be so to the race. It is quite in conformity with, and confirmatory of, this tenable theory, that the individuals who are loudest in their wailing cries against the order of natural things and in their passionate aspirations after a compensating supernatural order, are precisely those who, by temperament and training, are most susceptible to intense vibrations of self and least capable of quiet subordination of self to the whole. They are the people who think their weakness the mark of a superiority of nature, and systematically cultivate it as a channel of supernatural illumination.

If all visions, intuitions, and other modes of communication with the supernatural, accredited now or at any time, have been no more than phenomena of psychology—instances, that is, of subnormal, supranormal, or abnormal mental function—and if all existing supernatural beliefs are survivals of a state of thought befitting lower stages of human deve-

lopment, the continuance of such beliefs cannot be helpful, it must be hurtful, to human progress. The least evil of them is that they are vain diversions of thought and feeling, whereby these are in large measure turned to waste—the energies of men distracted from the right way of true gain to themselves and of practical service to one another, and dissipated in unfruitful aspirations and works. The enthusiastic optimist, recoiling from the painful sense of the long train of evil which has been and is in the world into grateful anticipation of a future of ever-perfecting goodness and happiness, may foresee incalculable gains to mankind from the systematic utilization of all his powers according to a right method; not only in increase of knowledge of nature and in the practical uses and comforts that inevitably result therefrom, but in a complete knowledge of the constitution of each human nature, of the laws of its hereditary production, and of its exact developments in relations to its surroundings, and in the systematic application of such knowledge—not ever seriously attempted hitherto—to promote health of mind and wealth of good thought and feeling.* He may well conclude, from his basis of thought, that men will never realize to what height of power and happiness in the world

* He may think, as De Mettrie said, that materialism is the antidote of misanthropy.

they can grow, until they realize that they come into being by natural laws, and by no other laws; that they feel and think and act throughout their lives in accordance with natural laws, and in virtue of no other laws; that in success and in failure, in health and in sickness, in folly and in wisdom, in life and in death, they are subject to natural laws, and to no other laws.*

In order that such fervent aspirations of the scientific optimist may be realized, it will be necessary for him to persuade men to look facts sincerely in the face and to accommodate themselves faithfully to them; knowing rigorously and feeling intimately their responsibilities under a reign of natural law everywhere, they must be convinced of the futility

* It was Christian teaching which developed the distinction of vices from faults (the Latin *vitia* having had no such meaning); by regarding them as offences against a supernatural Being, which entailed corresponding punishments, they were deemed *wicked*, and called *sins*. An immense consequence has been that the punishment of vices in this world, just as follies are punished, by the unfailing operations of natural law, has been overlooked, and the just sense of practical responsibility weakened or extinguished in many minds. If everybody sincerely saw and felt that vices are only follies or faults writ in red ink, so to speak, and inevitably punished in their consequences, he might feel as much ashamed of them, and be as anxious to avoid them, as if they were faults or follies. After all, those who have done the best work of the world have been practically necessitarians or fatalists, not dreamers of free-will. To say nothing of individuals, were not the Stoics, who denied free-will, heroes; the Epicureans, who asserted it, sensualists? Did not Calvinists establish freedom of conscience, the Jesuits destroy it?

of pouring forth lamentations and supplications to invisible powers, and join hands heartily for social co-operation in fulfilling the duties and responsibilities which they frankly recognize and resolutely accept; acknowledging sincerely, however sadly, to themselves, that they must work out their own destiny, not with fear and trembling in abject abasement, but with open-eyed sincerity, stern fortitude, mutual encouragement and help, and calm resignation to the inevitable. The problem is not one of wailing pessimism, or of exulting optimism, which are both simple subjective states of the individual that are not of the least concern to the universe; it is a problem of stern acceptance of facts and of resignation to their inexorable sway. The emotion and energy which hitherto have been expended on the supernatural will then have their place and fulfil their natural function in kindling a glowing feeling of human brotherhood, and in the labour to promote its weal. The passionate, altruistic feeling of woman, no longer wasted in abortive aims and work under the guidance of ministers of the supernatural, cannot fail to bring a force of incalculable value to the work of social development, when it is applied, in accordance with true knowledge, by social means to social ends.

How is it possible that the vital realization of the conception and feeling of human solidarity can take

place effectually until man, brought into full face and acknowledgment of his social responsibilities, perceives the necessity of dealing sincerely with them, and ceases to attempt to elude or escape them by flying to supernatural aspirations and theories. The known effects of social unions of men to engender and inflame a common emotion render it certain that such realization, if it take place, will be accompanied with a heat of enthusiasm that will make the feeling for others a more intimate part of the individual's nature, a far less alien feeling, than it has ever been yet in the history of humanity, and to make also universal that which at its best hitherto has only been sectional.* Its aim should be, and its effect

* Of the high state of inflammation to which a common emotion in relation to preposterous tenets of faith might be raised, some most striking examples were afforded by the various extraordinarily fanatical sects which prevailed during the early struggles of Christianity, notably by the Montanists, of whom Renan writes, "Le vrai chrétien, ne vivant qu'en perspective du jugement dernier et du martyre, passe sa vie dans la contemplation. Non seulement il ne doit pas fuir la persécution, mais il lui est ordonné de la rechercher. On se prépare sans cesse au martyre comme à un complément nécessaire de la vie chrétienne. La fin naturelle du chrétien, c'est de mourir dans les tortures. Une crédulité effrénée, une foi à toute épreuve dans les charismes spirites, achevaient de faire du montanisme un des types de fanatisme le plus outrés que mentionne l'histoire de l'humanité." Again, "La recherche du martyre devient une fièvre impossible à dominer. Les circoncellions, courant le pays par troupes folles pour chercher la mort, forçant les gens à les martyriser, traduisirent en actes épidémiques ces accès de sombre hystérie." (*Marc-Aurèle et la Fin du Monde Antique.*)

may be, to weld the feeling for self and the feeling for others into one feeling, as it is now in the parent's love of child, so that altruism becomes the highest gratification of self, and egoism the best service to others: to make society, in fact, such a harmony of parts as a great musical performance by a large orchestra, where the nicest adaptations of parts in the most complex co-ordinations and subordinations of them work in unison to the accomplishment of a grand harmonic whole; where undue self-assertion, or any similar expression of egoism, would be an outrageous discord, marring the harmony and making the individual ridiculous—where the fullest altruism is the best-attuned egoism. Man's inhumanity to man, which has made his past history on earth a tale of horrors and woe, must be extinguished by such an evolution of the living sentiment of human solidarity, since it cannot consist with it.

Assuredly the sublime examples of pagan devotion and heroism in the past, as well as the extraordinary spectacles of self-sacrificing devotion presented by many of the despised communists and nihilists at the present day, give us the full right to anticipate that humanity, so long as the energy of its evolution is not exhausted, will find within itself, without help from supernatural sources, the enthusiasm necessary to the continuance and perfecting of its develop-

ment. All which may be soberly true without its being thereby hindered from happening—such possibly the transcendent irony of fate—that the complete accomplishment of disillusion shall be the close of development and the beginning of degeneration.*

If supernatural beliefs are not founded otherwise than in the weaknesses and errors of human nature, it is not intellectual and moral waste only that the emancipated observer will see reason to charge against them; he can hardly fail to accuse them of active complicity in wrong and much direct moral mischief. To him it will seem evident that they act perniciously by driving a split through the unity of human nature and thus destroying its fundamental concord and veracity. The individual is rendered incapable of seeing facts truly as they are, or himself in true relations to them; a sincere moral and intellectual unity of being is made impossible. The result at best is a failure to go so far forward in real intellectual and moral development

* Amiel, a sufficiently spiritual being, discovered this, or something like it, to be true of the individual. "La désillusion complète serait l'immobilité absolue. Celui qui a déchiffré le secret de la vie finie, qui en a lu le mot, est sorti du monde des vivants, il est mort de fait." Again, "Le sentiment de l'infini épouvante, trouble, pétrifie. L'abîme insondable est partout, puits béant derrière chaque chose dont nous perçons la surface. Pour vivre, il faut voiler l'abîme, accepter de convention une surface et une forme quelconque, se tailler une maison dans l'immense univers. Pour connaître il faut savoir ignorer, savoir affirmer," etc. (*Fragments d'un Journal Intime.*)

as men might go were they to start from a central unity of being; at the worst it involves in its consequences actual hypocrisy of nature, conscious or unconscious, and all the moral and intellectual evils that flow inevitably from such discord of being. Are not these written in the terrible history of mankind on earth from its beginning unto now?

The history of supernaturalism in human belief, like the history of the individual, is its character. That history, when read with honest candour, is a condemnation, since it is for the most part a tragical story of the continued doings of the worst things, notwithstanding continually wasted aspirations after, and professions of, the best things. Were it not for the persistence of the ideal in the human heart, and for the redeeming instances of the few noble lives which it inspires and sacrifices, the faithful study of human history would be calculated to demoralize human nature. The student could hardly help rising from it with the deeply imbued conviction that, whatever man has been, it would have been something better not to have been; and that, whatever he may be destined to become at his best, it were something better not to be at the cost of what he has been, is still, and must continue to be in the long and painful process of becoming it.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
GENERAL LITERATURE.	2	MILITARY WORKS.	34
PARCHMENT LIBRARY	21	POETRY	35
PULPIT COMMENTARY	23	WORKS OF FICTION	42
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SERIES	31	BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG	43

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